

the christian SCHOLAR



Faith and Verification

Ian T. Ramsey / Michael Foster / John E. Smith

Rudolf Bultmann / Carl Michalson / Julian N. Hartt

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THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

The Christian Scholar is a journal devoted to exploring the issues that arise as the intellectual life of our day is examined in the light of Christian faith. It exists to recognize the contributions to the theological enterprise of scholars working faithfully in their own disciplines, and to bring theological dimensions to bear upon intellectual perplexities and cultural problems. It seeks to provide a means for dialogue among persons who take seriously our present predicament and who believe that analyses of Christian faith and culture, of moral discipline and intellectual judgment, and of confused aspirations and values in contemporary society are essential both to the health of academic communities and to the responsible fulfillment of the vocation of Christian scholars and teachers.

Although a critical approach is stressed, we seek primarily to affirm, not to deny. What we wish to affirm is the idea of wholeness versus fragmentation. We wish to affirm that the world is a creation, open to investigation and learning; that there is a Holy order of meaning in which the search for truth and the concern for its communication is meaningful; that the endeavors of creative thought and academic learning can be renewed by scholarship practiced as a Christian vocation; and that all the various fragments — whether in racial hostilities, enmities between nations, isolations of academic fields, estrangements between persons or between men and God — are broken pieces intended for reconciliation in God's redemptive work in Jesus Christ. The affirmation which is proposed is that God has something immediate and real to do, both in judgment and in love, with all that men attempt in the work of culture and the mind.

We take God seriously and know that this poses serious problems and responsibilities. We share the difficulty of posing the question of God in its relevance for men in a world which has "come of age" — where the affirmations of belief are hard but where there is discontent in unbelief. We sense the common responsibility of pointing to God's presence and action in the midst of intellectual life and scholarly work. By relating Christian belief to the world of learning, all areas of knowledge can become avenues for encounter with truth, and faith can be held as a way of understanding. Though the Christian scholar does not have programmatic precision, he can serve God and the world meaningfully through study pursued as a vocation. His own life can become a vocation.

As Christians, we believe in freedom of the mind. This is the freedom to rigorously inquire after knowledge in all fields and to interpret what is learned as the truth itself demands. It is the freedom of respecting the relative autonomy of secular disciplines. At the same time it is the freedom for the Christian thinker to make clear that what is known through intellectual endeavor has its ultimate meaning as a worldly matter in the light of God's providence. Thus the freedom which is insisted upon as grounded in faith is freedom to pursue all knowledge and to place that pursuit in a framework fashioned by God. Beneath such freedom there is a confident trust — an assurance that the faithful scholar is accepted of God. That confidence in turn is based upon God's faithfulness, the source of our final justification.

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J. EDWARD DIRKS, *Editor*
for the Editorial Board.

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The Relevance of Contemporary Analytic Philosophy for the Community of Christian Scholars

by the Editor

An analytic movement — logical, linguistic, empirical, and even positivistic — has characterized much of the contemporary philosophical endeavor. Christian thinkers who have believed this movement to be important have responded to it in various ways. Some have criticized it while others have debated with it. Some have interpreted it as a drastic alteration in philosophical inquiry while others have seen in it a reassertion of characteristic emphases in our philosophical tradition. Some have dismissed it as a technical enterprise which revealed the degree to which philosophy has been captured by extreme forms of skeptical positivism while others have utilized its insights and procedures for purposes of reform and construction in theology. This variety of responses within the community of Christian scholars is reflected in this number of *The Christian Scholar*.

The analytic currents in contemporary philosophy have given rise to varying appraisals of Christianity, the meaning of religion, and the nature of theology. Although the long and complex history of the relation between philosophy and Christian belief (as well as its theological expression) is significant both for the points of conflict and of co-operation between the two enterprises, many persons in the communities rooted in each have in recent years been talking past one another. Theologians and philosophers have all too often assumed that they were concerned with the same primary questions, and they have neglected the many differences which characterized their particular interests. If they appeared to be allies, they could support and complement each other; if they were rivals, they could carry on their debate along independent lines, often to the side of the main intellectual issues which were treated in academic communities. The emergence of the analytic movement, and the thrust of it in the name of scientific accuracy, has brought them into more direct encounter once again. The theologian has learned to listen to linguistic and empiricist critiques of theology, insofar as these were offered. He has frequently been distressed by the philosopher's insistence that the concern with meaning is prior to the concern with truth. In this respect the philosopher has appeared to withdraw from any direct encounter with theology; if he has had anything to say to the theologian, he has said it as the critic and analyst. And the theologian has felt deprived of a familiar and historic relationship with the philosopher, often prompting him to desire a return to common explorations — both of meaning and of truth — which would permit

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continuing fruitful associations and not require them to go separate ways. The new ground which has been sought for renewing conversation provides a basis on which philosophy and theology may speak to each other in ways which will be mutually beneficial.

There is a third and more generally significant aspect of the analytic currents in contemporary philosophy which demands our attention. This movement is not to be understood only as a rather technical and narrow preoccupation of academic philosophers, parochially limited to a segment of the academic world of Oxford and a handful of Americans. Nor are the issues for philosophy and Christianity merely the fragile and controversial furnishings for a side-show of the community of scholars. Instead of being parochial and peripheral, the currents in this movement expose some of the deepest perplexities of thoughtful persons in the age in which we live. Whether they are Christian believers or not, the contemporary generation of serious and thoughtful people, both scholars and laymen, are confronted with the kinds of difficulties to which sustained attention has been given by analytic philosophers and their theological associates. The central question: "How is it possible for man to think about God?" and the related question: "How is Christian belief in God to be expressed in meaningful language?" are not only "academic" questions for philosophers and theologians. They are part of the concern of anyone who wishes to critically understand what is professed to be true in Christian faith for thought and practice. If they are enquirers into the basis and substance of this faith, they want also to know whether Christianity can be expressed in its essential aspects in language that is meaningful and communicative. The analytic and critical endeavor in philosophy is representative of a generation which shares its perplexities about the meaning and relevance of faith when old beliefs are said to have "lost their meaning" and when there is the tendency to distrust any but scientific explanations and statements. A large portion of the Christian community may live in devout innocence, untroubled by these perplexities. But this way is not open to the community of Christian scholars and those who share its intellectual vocation in the contemporary world. They want rightly to know whether Christian faith is the result of talking oneself out of anxiety by the entertainment of unreal supposition, or whether something that is true is claimed and can be meaningfully supported as true in the thought, worship, and practice of a Christian.

II

In order to explore these various aspects of the nature and relevance of contemporary philosophical analysis for the community of Christian scholars, we invited a group of persons in England and America who are near the center of this movement to contribute articles and reviews. What we had in mind in extending our invitations was that we desired, first, to provide reliable current

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information about the nature and background of this movement and, secondly, to assist all of our readers across the lines of various intellectual interests to acquaint themselves with the issues central to the movement and most significant for thoughtful Christians. Professor Ian T. Ramsey of Oriel College, Oxford, agreed to prepare a paper which would be historical, describing the background of the recent movement and bringing us to the present position where philosophy and theology are once again taking helpful notice of each other. Just before his tragic death last autumn, Mr. Michael B. Foster of Christ Church, Oxford, expressed his willingness to write an article whose purpose would be to show the relation of this philosophical development to Christian thought and theology. Such an article would show in positive ways how the techniques of this type of philosophical endeavor assist in elucidating problems internal to theology. He had already written along these lines, and he indicated that he would somewhat modify and bring up-to-date a paper he had prepared a few years earlier to serve this purpose. Unfortunately the changes he had in mind were not made immediately, and we have no clear record of what he intended to develop further. We are grateful however that permission has been given by the Victoria Institute in Oxford to use the earlier paper as it was originally presented.

Several primary lines of exploration are followed out by the American contributors. We were desirous in the first instance of including a paper which would show the varieties of the empirical tradition as it has been represented in the recent philosophical movements. Professor John E. Smith of Yale agreed to present an analysis of the empirical tradition as a movement within philosophy but which is not wholly to be understood in its associations with the analytical philosophers. His paper makes clear therefore that empiricism is a broad endeavor within modern thought and that various particular strands within it can be clearly identified. Professor Paul L. Holmer of Yale University Divinity School was asked to write a paper out of his theological and philosophical background which would take seriously the way the analytical movement has attempted to reformulate religious assertions. His paper¹ will indicate the way in which theological studies may receive valuable assistance from any critical and analytical endeavor which has a concern for clarity in human discourse. One of the tendencies in the analytical movement has revealed how metaphorical is the language which much philosophy and theology employs, adopting this from the language of drama or using images drawn from interpersonal relationships. Yet if statements are to be critically analyzed for their meaning and truth in either philosophy or theology, then the concern with their clarity is a relevant one.

There are those who, writing from within the theological discipline, do have a deep concern for the clarity of discourse in Christian faith but who nevertheless

¹Professor Holmer's paper has been delayed and will be published in a subsequent issue of *The Christian Scholar*.

feel that the issues are too readily dissolved into superficiality by the particular endeavors in analytic philosophy to which we have given attention. Representing the group of Christian scholars who sense a lack of encounter on fundamental and profound levels with philosophical analysis, Professor Carl Michalson of Drew University has written a paper on the critical side. Philosophy in this new form may be judged as having been intimidated too fully by the philosophers of science; by narrowing its scope from truth to meaning, philosophy may be believed to have abdicated itself from certain perennial questions concerning man and existence. Thus the currents represented in this movement are challenged by a concluding paper which conceives a portion of theology's task today to be the recalling of philosophy to its proper and traditional concerns — or, if it declines, to abandon it and seek elsewhere for the associations which can lead to significant and fruitful dialogue.

Because Professor Rudolf Bultmann's theological studies of the New Testament pioneered the effort to interpret the essential truth of the Christian message by freeing it from its secondarily important setting, we have also included here a recent translation of one of his earlier essays. "What Sense Is There to Speak of God," originally included in *Glauben und Verstehen*, Vol. I (Tübingen, 1933), was translated into English by Professor Franklin H. Littell and is published here for the first time. Though this essay does not of course proceed directly from the analytical movement in contemporary philosophy, it is evidence of the fact that a critical concern with language and methodology is present in a clear way in contemporary biblical theology as well. The emphasis upon "demythologizing" with which Professor Bultmann has been associated is not primarily a negative thing. It is a positive process, sometimes referred to as "existential interpretation," which attempts to give the essential content of the Christian message precedence over its mythological biblical setting. Myth is not stripped from the Bible, but the kerygma is separated from the myth, in the interest of clear and faithful communication of the Christian faith. Its interest in clarity links it with the central motif in analytic philosophy as currently practiced within this contemporary movement.

The review section centers upon two carefully prepared papers. Professor Julian N. Hartt in philosophical theology at Yale University has prepared an article-review of one of the major epistemological volumes in our day, Professor Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. Though it would be unfair to identify this book directly with the analytic philosophical enterprise as it has been described here, the issues which are considered are intimately related to the problems of knowledge and language which are central to the analytic movement. In addition, Mr. Ruel W. Tyson, a graduate student at the University of Chicago in philosophy and the social sciences and formerly associated with Professor Polanyi at the University of Manchester, has prepared a detailed and annotated bibliography of the major contributions which

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have been made to the literature of philosophical analysis. A study of these writings can introduce the reader to the whole range of the movement, its development and diversity, as well as its implications for other disciplines and particularly for theology and ethics.

III

Two types of endeavor, desirous of considering the connections (or lack of them) between Christianity and philosophy, can be identified. One is the specific and somewhat technical effort to develop a Christian philosophy. Though it is often dismissed as impossible on the same grounds that a Christian mathematics is impossible, serious attempts have been made and continue to be made to sustain the possibility. There is however no good reason why the legitimate endeavor to show all of the implications of a biblical Christian faith for life, the world, and knowledge should not be called by its rightful name of theology. Until an understanding of the nature of philosophy is supplied us solely from the resources of biblical theology, and until what is meant by the term "Christian philosophy" represents a Christian solution to all basic philosophical problems, the term is itself misleading. The independent and autonomous role for the philosophical endeavor should not be violated by a kind of substitution for it of something else. And as long as secular philosophy would still continue, the main problems of relating it to Christianity would remain.

The other type of endeavor is more general. Instead of proposing an identifiable form of philosophy which can be called "Christian" and which is not simply another name for theology, it is the endeavor which explores relationships between philosophy and Christianity. Philosophy then is understood to be a continuing enterprise developing along with the history of Christianity. Because of the universality of the claims of Christian belief, nothing in the historical scene is alien to it. But as long as its claims represent one proposed alternative among others, the Christian position is required to respect the integrity of those positions which are different from or rival to it. Christianity is *in relation with* culture and all of its particular endeavors because Christian belief asserts what is believed to be true for the world and man and God, while that which is known is not completely or exhaustively affirmed on the grounds of Christian belief alone. As long as knowledge is limited in part by the perspective which is assumed, Christianity stands in a relationship with other ways of understanding reality. The only alternative is that of radically severing any relationship. When there is complete dissociation, nothing more need be said. Then Christianity has been disconnected from historical life and culture generally; it is enclosed in categories unrelated to and irrelevant for anything connected with human knowledge generally. Such a contradiction in the meaning of Christianity denies its own tradition, and it finally denies an openness to the Bible itself.

The actual historical existence of Christianity and the Church in the world requires that the meaning and implications of essential Christian faith are themselves partly a cultural process. Christian belief can be said to remain distinct from forms of culture and aspects of knowledge; it must even resist the tendencies within itself to become merely cultural religion. But it stands in a polar relationship of mutual criticism and co-operation with all human enterprises, unless it relinquishes an essential claim to universality (demanded by the affirmation that "Jesus Christ is Lord," perhaps the oldest Christian confession) and completely severs all relationships. Christianity's independence — to put it differently — is such that it may not, without violence to its essentials, be reduced to any single philosophical construction. And the philosophical enterprise is also independent in that it must carry out philosophical aims. But they are so related that each has implications for the other. This is an *essential* relationship; its involvements underlie historical connections.

Christianity is neither a logic nor a metaphysics, but it needs both for its full and accurate expression. Concepts and methods have been borrowed in order that clarity of thought and communication might be achieved for Christian belief. The task of understanding and sharing Christian faith has had to draw upon resources of human knowledge which were part of philosophy, history, literature, and various other fields. Christianity's existence in the world has required for its articulation resources which it could not uniquely supply. Thus it has been dependent on the world for its continued sustenance. Many illustrations of this dependence could be cited, for they are part of the history of Christian thought. However there has also been another movement whereby Christianity has contributed from its own essential substance the material for advancing intellectual inquiry. The need it had of resources for understanding and communication has been met by a response which has had effects for the resources themselves. Whenever Christianity has not contributed to the dialogue, philosophy has been deprived of that substance which resisted rigid formalization; whenever Christianity has not sought for resources beyond its own limits, theology has retreated to a dogmatic position wherein it was safe from the criticisms of all secular knowledge. The two are therefore related in essential ways whenever both philosophy and Christianity are alert to their own substantial issues and cognizant of the perils which result from excluding common and mutual concerns.

The recovery of dialogue between philosophy and Christianity may therefore be celebrated today as an occasion of significance. We must nevertheless recognize that this recovery is not solely the re-establishment of the former dialogue. It does not proceed along the earlier and historic lines — at least not in obvious ways. A rather pure, sometimes technical, analytic, and logical interest persists in philosophy, and an historical, sometimes insular, confessional interest persists in theology. An earlier period in philosophy was identified with general questions about the nature of things and about demonstrative arguments for a given posi-

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tion with respect to its truth. This tradition moved somewhat naturally alongside the theologian's primary interests. There were disputes but they were largely about questions of substance. Today the analytical movement in philosophy makes no claims with reference to the nature of things in the interest of truth. This is the proper business of the scientist, whoever he may be, and even the theologian may be counted as one. The analyst is concerned more particularly with the meaning of the language in which that knowledge claimed as true is expressed and formulated. For the sake of clarification he practices the art of analysis. He is neither ally nor rival of the theologian. If he is anything at all, he is the critic and objector. The theologian however has also become newly aware of his methodological program. He may therefore also be concerned primarily with critical analysis and he is interested anew in the presuppositions which are basic to his theological endeavors.

IV

The central concern for modern thought which contemporary analytical movements in philosophy make evident is the concern for clarification of language. It is expressed in the persistent and probing inquiry: "What is the meaning of this?" In order that clarity may be achieved, the language by which access is given to what a person asserts is subjected to analysis. Terms are defined by their usage and not only their "ideal" meanings. The composite structures of words in sentences or phrases are "unpacked" to disentangle their intricacies and to determine with care what kind of an empirical story may be told about them. Especially is analogical language so treated that it delivers clear meanings. And any language which cannot finally be brought to clarity is considered as unmeaningful. Part of the problem which philosophy encounters in this movement is that of knowing clearly the references of the language. Some would insist that these must be to empirical data, thereby following a tradition of radical empiricism. Others would however admit as meaningful statements those which are primarily "policies for life," and these could include not only ethical judgments but also confessional statements. Though it may be that the analytic motif in contemporary philosophy represents a profound antipathy to the humanistic languages of the arts, there are those who would not impose such severe restrictions. They would in fact join others who would seek to revindicate the non-scientific uses of language for poetry and theology.

However important is the concern for clarity in language, and every intellectual enterprise is inescapably involved in language, it appears obvious that the clarity which must be sought is with respect to real living language. Merely to substitute an artificially created language, except for limited and technical endeavors (as in mathematics), is not to serve the intellectual world. Living language is the form of human communication, and this is required throughout

the whole world of ideas and persons. Yet, unless living language is treated with the most deliberate care and scrutiny, it is frequently so affected by ambiguities that linguistic clarity of the most precise kind is not possible. Our habits of speech are such that we borrow terms, using them as analogies of what we intend, or varying their meanings in such ways that nuances are possible. And in indicating the nature of our beliefs we deliberately draw upon terms which can have no particular empirical references.

The living language of Christian faith is a most intricate language. It is in part historical language; but it is also in part what Professor Philip Wheelwright has called "depth-language." In such language an attitude toward life is stated, a type of perspective is indicated, and an assertion about how one believes he ought to live is made. Moreover the living language of faith refers to revelation — it attempts to express from the side of the believer and of the community of faith what occurred as God disclosed himself through the key events in human history. This is uniquely and supremely true of the event of Jesus Christ, in whom the divine act and the prophetic interpretation of the meaning of the act coincide completely, so that here we meet "the Word made flesh." Thus the language of faith employs both images and concepts. Their relationships to one another and to revelation have served to interest the community of Christian faith in the problems of language almost from the very beginning.

Though there is a long tradition in Christian history which has taken note of the serious defects of language for the expression of the content and meaning of revelation, a number of interests and tasks of theological scholarship have required positive attention to the problems of language. One of these has been the recurrent need for proper interpretation of the Scriptures, and biblical exegesis, particularly as it is expressed in textual criticism, has required careful scrutiny of the meaning of biblical language. Another has been the persistent need of the Church since the first century to live in cultures where conceptual patterns of language were employed. The meaning and content of the faith had to be understood and communicated in terms controlled not only by the images of revelation but the concepts of linguistic forms. Perhaps above all, the requirement for the communication of "the Word made flesh" had to come to terms with the indispensability of living language. It can therefore be relieved sufficiently of certain of its normal defects that it may be a faithful instrument for the proclamation of the Gospel. The criteria therefore of appropriateness in language is to be apprehended in relation to God and his revelation rather than only in the analysis of language itself.

The problem for the Christian is the continuing one of how the faith in which he stands and the truth to which he makes claim may be expressed in the historically conditioned language which we have. Whether the language referred to is biblical language or the linguistic usages of the present moment, the important recognition is that we have only such language to express that which

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both transcends history and yet is historically conditioned. The two entities referred to here are, first, the essence of Christian faith, namely that God acted with man in and through Jesus Christ, and second, the time-bound clothes of thought and language in which that message is expressed. From the theological side Professor Rudolf Bultmann was one of the first to deal with this issue in a full and systematic way with reference to biblical language. His writing has presented the view that biblical language expresses a living truth in forms of thought and understanding which are obsolete. The essential truth must therefore be translated into current forms not because Christian faith should be made easier for the modern mind but because only in this way can the qualitative content and meaning of faith be made radically apparent. In addition to laying bare the human response in faith as manifest in a new self-understanding, Bultmann's proposed "existentialist interpretation" restores clarity to the Christian message and yet preserves the ultimately paradoxical truth — the mystery — of Christian faith.

What remains then is the task of determining how the Christian is to understand and to communicate that message which is given to him in faith. How shall Christians appropriate the message and then turn to the world to offer it the meaning of the message for our ongoing lives? Both dimensions of this question require the recognition at the outset that the truth about God and the truth about man involve each other. Thus any statement about God as he is known in Jesus Christ is a way of saying something too about man and his situation. And any questions which men ask concerning themselves and their destiny — as long as they are rooted in more than academic curiosity — can draw upon the wisdom of the Christian message. This is to say that the language of faith is integrally part of the message itself and its communication is more than the technique of discovering the language which communicates it. Its communication elicits a response which belongs to the message; or differently, the message itself provides the possibility of its appropriation. Thus the truth of the message is not to be found only in its historical reliability but in its present completeness for the human situation. It is in this sense final or decisive; it is the beginning of truth and the perspective that redeems all other truth for us. It is the source and orientation of the meaning of all other truth we hold. Thus, the message essential to Christian faith is neither an assertion of facts nor a simple claim to "more" truth. If that were the case, the response to it could be skepticism. Instead it is a message which centers in a call to decision or an act of will. To ask that propositions of Christian communication be fully verifiable so that they may be clearly judged as to truth and falsity is to ask the impossible. They are rather statements of intention referring to the basis of authentic living. They are not therefore weaker. They reflect in fact the mystery that God makes his Word known through human words, a mystery which is a paradigm of the power of the Spirit.

V

Contemporary analytic movements in philosophy and the related critical enterprise in theology serve to remind us of a general characteristic of the age in which we live. It has a positive and a negative side. The first is evident in the widely held view that what is known through scientific endeavors is patently self-evident and significant. Such knowledge has its own justification — it is pragmatically useful; it is systematically coherent; and it is trustworthy in its correspondence with reality. The negative side is evident in the deep undercurrent of questioning and skepticism with which our generation tends to approach novel ideas especially if they make claims for decision and living. How is a confession of faith to be judged as true and a belief to be assessed as right? This is more than the reservation of a person who wishes to keep open various possibilities. Instead of being reflected in the question: "Can you prove it?," it is more adequately reflected in the question: "What is it you are talking about?"

When such a question confronts the Christian, whether it comes from his neighbor or out of his own inherent skepticism (and certainly doubt is an ingredient of faith), then he can no longer merely interpret and describe an experience objective to him. He is instead compelled to re-enter the experience and authenticate it anew for himself and provoke his listener to identify it in intimate terms. The resort then is to evocative language, rich in imagery and allusiveness, borrowed from the poets and the prophets but familiar to everyday life and all great literature. This will not bring to a halt the undercurrents of skepticism, but the intimacy of this skepticism reminds us at the same time that only a personal response in faith to the central message of the Gospel is meaningful. The Christian whose calling is to intellectual activity is not only to love God with the mind but also with the heart.

The issue in skepticism is not only that of intimacy but also of ultimacy. However radical may be the criticisms of the capacity of language, one must still contend with the Bible's supreme claim for its power — even to the extent of being capable of containing and imparting the Word of God. To be sure it is both the words of men *and* the Word of God. It reveals the serious defects in language and communication. But it is not a package of riddles. Rather it is a letter addressed to men; it is the story of our human life. Above all, its ultimacy is lodged in the claim that it is new, that is, different. Its ultimacy is not in its recency but in its shocking newness. It breaks into our other stories in such a different way that our first response to it is that it is a scandal, a paradox, and a mystery. These are the signs of the trauma of the new birth which is undergone when the old age gives way to the new. The event in which Christian faith finds its essential center is neither an emergent nor is it an emendation of our other truth; it is a new and final way of illuminating our life and destiny. And the God

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to whom witness of the new is borne, while he permits defective and inadequate language to convey it, has pledged to make himself heard through the poverty of our vocabularies.

The other ingredient — in addition to intimacy and ultimacy — is community. It is within the context of inter-relatedness that Christian faith is authenticated and shared. Just as ultimacy without intimacy can become coldly rationalistic, so intimacy without ultimacy can become sterile and subjective anti-intellectualism. Nevertheless both of them apart from community can produce the kind of destructive tensions which lead to the extremes either of moralism or shallowness. Community is given with the Gospel in order that its authentication and communication may be set within a shared life. Rightly appropriated and responded to in faith and in obedience, the Christian message is the treasure of a common life given us so that we need not cling to the world as though it were our only home nor despise it as if it were not God's gift.

This then is the Christian's freedom, that he need not be drawn so deeply into the frailties and defects of culture that he loses the very perspective which redeems time and brings it to its fulness, nor that he needs to be so preoccupied with the absolute clarity and correctness of culture that he succumbs to the temptation of impatience, losing faith in the very forces that constitute what meaning now supports our life. Christian freedom, with respect both to the essential message and to the world, derives from a sensitivity in which a Christian may point calmly to the presence of God where he is found and only secondarily sound the cries of alarm over his absence. That absence has already been filled with a miraculous presence. In the patience of grace, knowing that God acts in history, the Christian need not infer that because man is subject to limited and defective culture and can do nothing which is ultimate, therefore nothing clear and final is being done. In the midst of our skeptical age, when we do not know how to respond, God may have room and presence whereby he may alter and make new the mystery of our history. And the believing community is set in the midst of that history with the tasks of patient work, prayer, and its steady witness to his incredible mercy.

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Contemporary Empiricism

Its Development and Theological Implications

IAN T. RAMSEY

What is common to present day "Oxford philosophy" and the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle? How are both to be related to the earlier kind of empiricism practised by G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell? Must a religious man see contemporary empiricism as a threat to his position? Or can its insights, methods, and techniques be of service to philosophical theology? It is against such background questions as these that the present article is written. We must of course recognise from the start that contemporary empiricism is not to be seen as a "system"; still less as a group of conclusions. It is rather the label for a certain approach to philosophical questions. In this article I shall try to elucidate this approach by surveying its development over the last half-century. We shall see that some of its features have been retained throughout the whole of this time; others have been modified on the way or even rejected.

The Interest in Meaning

Of all the features of recent empiricism undoubtedly the most constant and important has been a primary interest in meaning, in meaning rather than truth as such. This arose originally as a natural — and we may think welcome — reaction to the literature of the neo-Hegelians, of which William Wallace may be taken as a convenient example. On pp. 301-2 of his popular *Prolegomena to the Study of Hegel's Philosophy*¹ we read:

The first part of Logic, the theory of Being, may be called the theory of unsupported and freely-floating Being. . . . The terms or forms of Being float as it were freely in the air, and we go from one to another, or — to put it more correctly — one passes into another. . . . This being is immediate: i.e. it contains no reference binding it with anything beyond itself, but stands forward baldly and nakedly, as if alone; and, if hard pressed, it turns over into something else. . . . The ether of 'Is' presumes no substratum, or further connexion with anything; and we only meet a series of points as we travel along the surface of thought.

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¹Oxford University Press, 2nd edition 1894, with reprints as late as 1931.

Like the child with the Emperor's new clothes, it was G. E. Moore (1873-1958), the man of plain common sense, who suspected that discourse such as this might be no more than pretentious make-believe, and he challenged such metaphysical ventures in Hegelianism with the question: What does it mean? More particularly (he said, in effect) instead of discussing, as isolated concepts, such topics as Sensation and Perception, Time, Implicit Beliefs — to take only a few varied examples at random — let philosophical discussion centre rather on the common sense assertions from which such concepts take their rise. E.g., having seen a speck on the side of a distant mountain, we may, in the light of subsequent discovery, say that we then "saw a man," but did not "see the man as a man." "Sensation" and "perception" are to be understood by reference to the relations between such phrases as these. Again, have not many puzzles about the "reality" of Time presupposed some such argument as this: "We do think of Time"; therefore "There must be such a thing as Time"; therefore "Time is a fact"; therefore "Time is real." Yet there is at least one well-known case where this sequence does *not* provide a valid argument. The fact that "We do think of unicorns" does *not* entail that "There must be such things as unicorns." The moral is that philosophers (F. H. Bradley in particular) ought not to argue about the "reality" of Time before they know in what common sense assertions their arguments are grounded.² Or: how often have people been puzzled about the ontological status of "Implicit Belief" — whereas the phrase has to be elucidated in terms, e.g., of the surprise we register when, bending low and straining every muscle to raise a large black cardboard sphere, we fall backwards. From our saying "I thought it was iron" it does not follow that there exists some peculiar process of "thinking unconsciously." And so on. In this way philosophy becomes the analysis — the sorting, the illuminating comparison — of common sense propositions. In such an exercise the touchstone of meaning and reliability for Moore was an assertion such as "There is a table in my room," and all questions about the "external world," "the self," and "existence" were to be understood by reference to such reliable assertions as these.

Following out this empirical interest in meaning, we may next mention Bertrand Russell, who gave a much more systematic account of meaningful and reliable language. The touchstone of meaning would not be discovered in assertions about "tables in my room." The only words with clear unambiguous meanings were those given by ostensive definition and by reference to "sense data." These were the "atoms" out of which all reliable "molecular" language could be constructed.

In one respect this appeal to sense-data seemed promising, for sense-data were immune from error, being by definition common to veridical perception and illusion alike. But the most awkward questions seemed to arise about the relation of these sense-data to the surfaces of physical objects, and very tall stories

²See G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies*, Ch. VI.

came further to be told as to how physical objects were no more than groups of such sense-data, some of which indeed might never have been sensed. Empirical philosophy seemed to have become a kind of super-scientific metaphysics, with Russell as the arch-scientist. Further, "unsensed sense-data" was a phrase more reminiscent of Wallace than of Russell.

At any rate, the logical positivism of A. J. Ayer, as represented in his book *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), may be seen as in some ways a reaction against this pseudoscientific metaphysics. Propositions were now said to have meaning if and only if they could in principle be verified by sense experience, or (as a weaker form of this "Verification Principle" later had it) if and only if sense experience was in some way relevant to them. All other assertions, i.e., those to which sense experience was not in any way relevant, were meaningless; they were indeed literally "nonsense." It seemed as if a large part of ethics, and the whole of philosophical theology (if about some "other world"), fell under this description. But what of logic and pure mathematics? Had these likewise to disappear under the positivist axe? The answer was that room could be found for the assertions of logic and pure mathematics when, but only when, they claimed to be about nothing whatever, being purely verbal, merely symbol games, tautologous through and through. It was still true that for a proposition to have meaning, sense experience had to be relevant to it. Mathematics and logic fell into another category. They did not have meaning; they were purely verbal, true by convention, and talked about nothing whatever. Theological assertions found no logical kinsmen anywhere.

It is at this point in our survey that we can rightly mention Wittgenstein (1889-1951), for Wittgenstein can be seen as leading us away from any narrow, hard, and circumscribed account of meaning such as the Verification Principle expressed.

For Wittgenstein the Verification Principle (being itself obviously nonsense, for it could neither be verified by sense-experience nor taken as a tautology) was merely a mnemonic, enabling us to formulate the clearest, most precise, and least ambiguous of languages, and it was valuable in so far as its talk about "verification" and "criteria" implied that we would only understand a word when we had elaborated a context of use. The Verification Principle in fact specified a particularly simple and straightforward context within which many words undoubtedly gained their meanings. But Wittgenstein would not allow other areas of discourse to be dismissed as "meaningless" — language was rich in its logical variety, and a major task of philosophy was to display and preserve this variety against all who held that evidence and criteria, if they be not scientific evidence and criteria, are worthless; and against all reductionists who would argue that "x is *nothing but* y," that "x is *really only* y." Here are themes explored and

developed by Professor John Wisdom, not least in his discussion of our knowledge of "other minds."⁵

So we associate Wittgenstein — at least the later Wittgenstein⁶ — with a much richer concept of meaning than we find either in the logical positivists or in the early Russell.⁷ He rejects vigorously and explicitly the view that the meaning of a word is given by reference to some specific image or thing to be called its "meaning." "The meaning of a word is no longer for us an object corresponding to it."⁸ He is thus against the view once sponsored by himself and (as we saw) by Russell that words whose meanings are given by ostensive definition can be regarded as atoms from which a molecular language is built up: the language being in this way representative of a molecular world. Words rather belong to and are set within the most complicated contexts — they belong to "systems," verbal systems and social systems; they belong to an area of discourse, and the actions with which that discourse is inextricably knit. As for Verification, Verification is only important when it gives, in this sense, a full and reliable setting to the proposition it claims to verify. So, to understand a concept or a word, we must set it in its verbal and social context and describe what we find there; always remembering that a particular word may figure in a great variety of contexts; at the same time always searching for some illuminating paradigm case.

It is these themes in Wittgenstein that lead straight to the "ordinary language" philosophy associated today with the name of Oxford. On such a view philosophical concepts — such as "the mind" or "the good" — are to be elucidated and expounded⁹ not in terms of things or qualities they describe, but by reference to the respective occasions, e.g., when people speak of "knowing," "thinking," "imagining," or when they use the word "good" in sentences about the weather, cars, behaviour, tooth-paste, boys, girls, actors, judges, laws, and so on. So instead of describing memory in a super-scientific sort of way in terms of traces and images and "mnemonic causation," we must (on this view) describe what is the case when people talk about remembering something, how this is related to their past and future behaviour, and so on. Again (it would be said) let us not search for the "meaning" of the word "good" in terms of some particular quality — some "non-natural" quality. Rather study the various kinds of utterance men make

⁵See John Wisdom, *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (1953) and *Other Minds* (1952).

⁶See *Mind*, Vol. LXIV (Jan. 1955), for G. E. Moore, *Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33*, p. 1. The earlier Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* (1922) shared Russell's view about "atomic" propositions.

⁷To examine developments in Russell would take us too far afield; but he is correct in claiming that the theory of "atomic propositions" does not fairly represent his later position such as we find it in, e.g., *Human Knowledge*. See B. Russell, "Philosophical Analysis" in *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. LIV (July 1956).

⁸Quoted by G. E. Moore, *Mind*, Vol. LXIII (Jan. 1954), p. 9.

⁹As they are by (say) Gilbert Ryle in *The Concept of Mind* (1949) and R. M. Hare in *The Language of Morals* (1952).

about "a good x" and the varied circumstances in which these utterances are made. In this way the word "good" will be seen both to describe and to commend a certain pattern of behaviour. Here is the way to discuss the concept of goodness. "Don't look for meaning, look for use" is a favourite slogan of Wittgenstein. If we recognize a word at all (Wittgenstein implied in this typical aphorism), we already know the meaning. But what we can learn and what philosophy exists to teach us is the *use* of the word, i.e., its logical behaviour, i.e., the logical connections it has with other words in ordinary discourse: recognising that ordinary discourse may be richly variegated. The highest aim of philosophy must be to generalize about the logical pattern of the most complex discourse, not excluding metaphysical and theological discourse, and to give clues to its logical structure, to search for illuminating paradigm cases, such as the Verification Principle provides in a simple and elementary, even if important, case, viz: scientific discourse.

It is this variety of "use" which a word may have, and which a philosophical treatment needs to survey, that led Professor J. L. Austin among others to see the *Oxford English Dictionary* as having a very significant part in philosophical discussion.⁸

In these different ways then Anglo-Saxon empiricism over the last fifty years has concentrated on the problem of meaning, and except for the early Russell and some of the logical positivists, this emphasis on meaning has turned our attention not on objects — sense-data or other, which might be said to be the "meanings" of words — but rather to the contextual setting of words and the patterns of behaviour into which words and sentences are interlocked. If at this stage we wished to formulate any interim conclusions which might have bearing on philosophical theology, we might list them as three:

- (i) Let us not look for "objects" as the meanings of words.⁹ Nor would this slogan exclude such words as "God" or "the soul."
- (ii) When presented with problematical words, look always at the discourse and behaviour in which such words are set.
- (iii) In particular, let us be alert to the empirical grounding of this discourse.

The Concern with Language

Here is a second feature of contemporary empiricism, which we can likewise trace in outline over the past half-century. For while (as we have seen) contemporary empiricism has been characterized by an interest in meaning, it has also been characterized — as may already have become evident, for the two features can only

⁸See e.g. *A Plea for Excuses*, Presidential Address, *Aristotelian Society*, 1956-7, pp. 12-13.

⁹Cp. Berkeley, *Alciphron* VII, ed. T. E. Jessop, p. 293, where Euphranor casts doubt on "the current opinion" expressed by Alciphron "that every substantive name marks out and exhibits to the mind one distinct idea."

be separated for didactic purposes — by an interest in language; and we may trace here too, development in its themes, and changes of emphasis.

Let us go back first to Russell, for (as we implied in our earlier remarks) Moore had nothing distinctive to say on this second theme. Indeed he was disposed on the whole to take language — especially the assertions of common-sense — very much for granted. On the other hand whatever criticisms may be made of Russell's theory of sense-data, there arose alongside this theory a view of language as displaying logical diversity, and it was a view to which Russell was also led by his interest in logical and mathematical puzzles and paradoxes. To give an illustration: while Russell may have been wrong in picturing a physical object as a group of actual and possible sense-data; he may well have been right in arguing for a logical difference between the phrases "the table" and "that brown object there." He was certainly right in distinguishing Class and Member words (for example) as of different "logical type." On this view, if a word of one logical type is substituted for a word of another type in a meaningful sentence, that sentence is likely (a) to become nonsensical or (b) to lead by reliable inferences to bogus puzzles. For example: (a) we may say "I love a juicy round *orange*." But we cannot significantly say "I love a juicy round *square*." "Orange" and "square" exhibit type differences, and the additional puzzle of "round square" suggested by the second sentence is only another indication of the diverse status of even the word "round" in the two sentences. Or (b) we can substitute "Equator" for "bridge" in the sentence, "I crossed the bridge," and it is not evident that nonsense has been generated. But while we can say, "'I crossed the bridge' entails 'I touched it,'" we cannot say, "'I crossed the Equator' entails 'I touched it.'" Yet any puzzle here is only bogus, arising from a failure to distinguish words whose logical behaviour differs.

Another aspect of the logical diversity of language is expressed in the distinction between logical and verbal form. "Lions are real" and "Lions are yellow" may be *verbally* similar, but their *logical* behaviour is vastly different, a difference which Russell expressed symbolically by the difference between:

($\exists x$). (x is a lion)
and ($\exists x$). (x is a lion). (x is yellow)

To confound this logical difference is to consider existence as a predicate which (as is well known) Kant thought was the mistake behind the ontological argument. In fact, generalizing, Russell would say that the problems of philosophy are problems about language. They arise — and here Russell and Wittgenstein would agree — when we fail to distinguish what is logically diverse, or when we assimilate too readily phrases which in fact differ in their logical behaviour. If we used language with sufficient logical circumspection, these problems would disappear. So the story can continue with a reference to Wittgenstein, and in this aspect of empiricism Wittgenstein passes easily to Ryle.

Many philosophical errors arise because of false analogies, analogies which are suggested by the actual verbal use of certain expressions, and it must be the task of philosophy to clear up such misunderstandings. For instance, because we speak of a "green leaf" and a "good action," because in their actual use these phrases are verbally similar, they may be taken to be *logically* analogous.¹⁰ But we shall look in vain if we expect to find a "non-natural" quality of goodness, parallel to a sensible quality of greenness. Again, we speak of someone "knowing Greek" and "running a mile" — and the similarity of verbal form may tempt us to regard these as analogous descriptions: whereupon — since "running" describes an activity we can see — "knowing Greek" is supposed to describe some occult activity going on somewhere even when Jimmy is not actually reading his Euripides, whereupon the ontological problems bristle. What sort of activity? Where? If only we were not misled by verbal form!

So for Wittgenstein the task of philosophy must be to put "in order our notions as to what can be said about the world."¹¹ For a definite example of this exercise we may look to Gilbert Ryle. The "false analogy" he criticizes in *The Concept of Mind* is the analogy embodied in, and suggested by, what he calls the Cartesian myth: the view that there are minds and there are bodies, and that just as all indicative words about bodies describe processes, so all indicative words about minds must do. The whole book — from one point of view — can be understood as a protest against a very common "category-mistake," a category blunder, assimilating the logical behaviour of categories whose logical behaviour differs. His over-all purpose is to describe the situations which give rise to such mental-conduct concepts as we use, and to display the verbal context in which particular assertions are set.¹²

In some ways the wheel has turned full circle, and the way the contemporary empiricist does philosophy comes in some ways quite close to what Moore did thirty or forty years ago. Eschewing general talk about Reality or Time or Causation, his interest is centred in those particular assertions of ordinary language which lie behind such topics, and which (he believes) can illuminate the difficulties and problems with which such topics bristle. The hope is that, by displaying plainly the rich assortment of relevant assertions and the actions with which they are interwoven, the pattern of reliable discourse will be evident, and such puzzles and problems as have hitherto occurred will be seen to have arisen from confounding what should be logically distinguished. Empirical

¹⁰Here is a point which did not escape A. N. Whitehead, though he developed it in a different way. See e.g. *Process and Reality* Pt. II, Ch. VII "The Subjectivist Principle."

¹¹See G. E. Moore *Mind* Vol. LXIII (Jan. 1955), p. 27, Moore's three articles in *Mind* January 1954, July 1954, and January 1955 are well worth study. Likewise J. Wisdom, "Ludwig Wittgenstein 1934-37," *Mind* April 1952; and the Critical Notice of *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* by P. F. Strawson, *Mind* January 1954.

¹²For a more detailed and critical discussion of Ryle see I. T. Ramsey *The Christian Scholar* Vol. XXXIX. 2 (June 1956), pp. 159-163.

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practice becomes very similar to what Moore displayed — being in the broadest terms an endeavour to settle generalities by considering particular assertions. But it works against background ideas which have undergone a vast development over recent decades. What has happened since Moore is that (a) we have come to appreciate more and more the vast logical variegation which language displays, and (b) we have come to have different ideas altogether about the “meaning” of words and sentences. But in all this it has been Wittgenstein rather than the logical positivists who has triumphed.

The Empirical Anchor of Theology

If we now take together the two themes — meaning and language — definitive of contemporary empiricism — we may discover, I believe, two suggestions of importance for reflection about the Christian faith:

(i) *Somehow, in some way, we must contrive to show the kind of situation which illuminates theological discourse*, and this means assertions as complex and diverse as the following: “Petition lies at the heart of our awareness of God”; “The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son”; “The inner movement of the Divine life of the Trinity is an eternal separation from itself and return to itself”; “At death the destiny of the individual soul is fixed for ever”; “The souls of saints are admitted at once to heaven, and they await the final day with Christ in glory.”

We must make plain the empirical anchorage of theological assertions such as these. It is only in this way that we shall discern the logical behaviour of such theological concepts as “prayer,” “procession,” “destiny,” “soul,” “glory,” “final day,” as are embedded in these assertions, while to be mistaken in their logical behaviour will be to profess absurdities, to generate bogus puzzles, and to perpetuate pointless controversies. Now from the start it is plain that we cannot expect, even in the simplest case, that an adequate logical setting will be given by reference to assertions which relate *only* to public behaviour, assertions which are interwoven with action that is no more the observable activity. For the basic claim of religion is for the “unseen.” At the same time, theological assertions must have a logical context which extends to, and is continuous with, those assertions of ordinary language for which sense experience is directly relevant. From such straightforward assertions, theological assertions must not be logically segregated: for that would mean that they were pointless and, in contrast to the only language which has an agreed meaning, meaningless.

The logical segregation of theology however has not been without its supporters, especially as it has seemed to some to preserve not only contemporary empirical insights, but also the claims of Christianity to be somehow “distinctive.” As we have seen, words for Wittgenstein were to be set in their context and knit inextricably with activity. So some have argued that theological words need

for their meaning and significance no more than their wider context of theological discourse, which further could even secure its distinctiveness by being logically isolated. On this view, we explicate religious language within the charmed circle of the discourse peculiar to and distinctive of some Confession or Church: language knit inextricably with that distinctive kind of behaviour called "Church-going," "Kneeling for prayer," perhaps "Worship." This is a point of view closely similar to that once expounded by A. MacIntyre.¹³ But it is plain that this logical segregation of theology makes theology utterly irrelevant, its words having no relation to ordinary discourse. It is "pointless" for the same reason that Wittgenstein considered much traditional metaphysics "pointless," viz., that it had no association with men's ordinary behaviour.

What then may be said? I suggest that without in any way rejecting empirical insights we may do more justice to metaphysics: (1) by taking more seriously and more critically Wittgenstein's doctrine that language is inseparable from "the actions into which it is woven."¹⁴ Let us ask ourselves just what sort of language is apt currency for our own activity¹⁵ (2) by recalling that Wittgenstein was haunted by the double use of "I" which he found in ordinary discourse. The one seems plainly descriptive; the other seems logically peculiar.¹⁶

Taking these two points together, consider the kind of situation in which I become aware of myself as distinctively "I," as being all my observable behaviour and more besides, when in exercising some decisive activity I discern what is more in my activity than the observable movement I display.¹⁷ Here is a "disclosure" situation which breaks in on us when we survey what Hume would call a train of distinct perceptions, when we survey our public, observable behaviour. The possibility of theology being given an appropriate empirical anchorage depends on its being related to what is objectively given in some such disclosure situation as that in which (subjectively) I become aware of myself. Nor can such situations *ex hypothesi* be wholly described in terms of observables, or they would cease to be transcendent, and our subjectivity would be objectified.

My suggestion is that to understand theological language, we must relate it to situations such as these which break in on us, when the straightforward assertions of ordinary language are grouped together in a particular way. The paradigm for any theological assertion¹⁸ is the kind of assertion we make about ourselves when

¹³See e.g. his essay "The Logical Status of Religious Belief" in *Metaphysical Beliefs*, edited by him.

¹⁴*Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G. E. Anscombe, 75c.

¹⁵Cp. Berkeley's view that a "discourse . . . that directs how to act" is "another use of words besides that of marking ideas," *Alciphron* VII, loc. cit. p. 292.

¹⁶See J. R. Jones, *The Two Contexts of Mental Concepts*, *Proc. Aristotelian Society*, 1958-9, and G. E. Moore, *Mind* Jan. 1955, p. 13 *et seq.*

¹⁷Here is the basis of what is called "free will."

¹⁸R. B. Braithwaite (see *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief*) endeavours to find a paradigm in the language of morals. In many ways this is a valuable

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we realize ourselves as active in a "disclosure" which occurs around an enumeration of the observable elements of our public behaviour.

(ii) *We must give to our theology a logical structure peculiar enough to ground it in the kind of situation I have just called a "disclosure."* Failure to do this will generate the most pointless and unedifying puzzles, and we must certainly be prepared to discover that some doctrinal controversies are bogus puzzles generated either by such logical errors as type-trespass or more broadly by failing to distinguish, and even assimilating, what is logically diverse.

On such a view, to understand e.g. the assertion "The soul is immortal," we would start (I suggest) with discourse about mortality and develop it in such a way as to lead to a disclosure which subjectively disclosed to us everything that sentences containing the word "soul" aptly express. "Immortality" is no "property" of a thing called a "soul," and there is no logical kinship between "My soul is immortal" and its verbal kinsman: "My flowers are everlasting." Again, to parallel talk about the omnipotence of God with talk about the all-powerfulness of a newspaper Proprietor, is bound to lead to blunders and puzzles. Once again let us rather understand "omnipotence" by seeing how non-theological discourse about power can become qualified in such a way as to lead to a disclosure whose objective constituent is the empirical basis for using the phrase: "God is omnipotent."¹⁹

Here then, if the empirical possibility of disclosures be allowed,²⁰ is an approach both sympathetic to, and benefiting from, contemporary empirical insights, while being of real value to theology. It is an approach which forces on theology no systematic metaphysics. Rather it goes to theology interested in the whole range of theological discourse, and its only aim is to map the logical relations exhibited by this discourse, so that we may see more clearly, more reliably, less ambiguously, how it performs the task which its initiators gave it when they theologized about their religion.²¹

Let us at the end recall William Wallace: "Religion and philosophy," he says,

and promising parallel, but in the end we are bound to criticize it as inadequate, not least because, for Braithwaite, Christian assertions seem more important for their psychological usefulness than for their logical ability to express the kind of transcendent situation in which they have traditionally been founded.

¹⁹For further detail I venture to refer the reader to my *Religious Language and Freedom and Immortality*. There I use the term "qualified model" to indicate the logical structure of a word such as "omnipotent," and how this differs from such a phrase as "exceedingly powerful" which has a purely descriptive logic. On this view, the phrase "omnipotent," while not without a descriptive element, behaves more like an imperative, and for this reason its verbal parallels are misleading.

²⁰As I urged in *The Christian Scholar*, *loc. cit.*, this is the crucial issue between the "believing" and the "unbelieving" empiricist today.

²¹In this way, we may learn their "commitment," a concept which Wittgenstein did not hesitate to use in a not dissimilar connection. See Moore *loc. cit.* Jan. 1954, esp. p. 7.

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"coincide: in fact, philosophy is itself a divine science, is a religion. . . ." ²² Here is the grand synthesis of Hegelianism and Christianity. But it was a synthesis which preserved only the palest version of the Christian faith: its historical basis was denied; its distinctive character compromised. The "essence of Christianity," continues Wallace, is "not the annals of a life once spent in serving God and man, but the words of the 'Eternal Gospel' . . . the 'revelation of reason' through man's spirit." ²³ What mattered was only the "revelation of reason" and the "Eternal Gospel." It was in reaction to claims such as these that there arose the "irrationalism" of Kierkegaard and Barth.

But contemporary empiricism, broadened to include "disclosures," introduces a more generous account of rationality, endeavours to map mystery,²⁴ and displays a deliberate concern for the empirical basis of the Christian faith as expressed in its language of Bible, doctrine, and liturgy knit with appropriate activity. We may recall that contemporary empiricism began in protest against neo-Hegelianism. It may even yet revitalise "theological thinking" as it has revolutionized philosophy.

²²*Loc. cit.*, p. 24.

²³*Loc. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁴For a disclosure is subjectively and objectively "mysterious" precisely because it is not exhausted by observables it includes and around which it arises.

Contemporary British Philosophy and Christian Belief

MICHAEL FOSTER

Synopsis

Contemporary British philosophy repudiates allegiance to a "school," but certain traits seem characteristic of it. It sees the task of philosophy as "analysis," i.e., as clarification, rather than as the attaining of new knowledge. It marks itself off from Logical Positivism, in that it does not restrict the claim to be meaningful to the factual and verifiable statements of science, history, and common-sense nor write off ethical, aesthetic, and theological propositions as nonsense. (But though it concedes *meaningfulness* to these latter classes, it is questionable whether it concedes to them the capacity of being *true*.)

In considering the relation of contemporary philosophy to Christian faith, two standpoints are possible. (1) One may examine the statements of Christian faith or theology from the point of view of contemporary philosophy. The debate has hitherto been conducted, both by Christians and others, mainly from this standpoint. From this point of view a main question concerns the validity (in respect both of meaning and of truth) of theological propositions. Or (2) one may attempt to see contemporary philosophy in the light of Christian faith. An attempt at this is made in the paper. From this point of view a main question is whether the demand for clarity, in the form in which contemporary philosophy makes it, is not contrary to a belief in mystery which Christianity must hold.

Philosophy on a theological basis is an alternative to the existing contemporary philosophy.

In writing this paper I have drawn largely on Chapter 1 of my book *Mystery and Philosophy* (London: SCM Press, 1957).

1. *Historical*

A great change has come over British academic philosophy in the last forty years. Up to the first World War, British universities were still dominated by the

Mr. Michael Foster was Student of Christ Church and Lecturer in Philosophy in Oxford University. He was author of *Mystery and Philosophy*, chairman of the University Teachers Committee of the World's Student Christian Federation, and chairman of the University Teachers Group of the British S. C. M. This lecture was originally delivered to the 942nd Ordinary General Meeting of the Victoria Institute at the Town Hall, Oxford, January 31, 1957. Mr. Foster was revising his lecture in consideration of recent developments in philosophy at the time of his death (see *The Christian Scholar*, March 1960).

idealist philosophy of T. H. Green, F. H. Bradley, B. Bosanquet, the Cairds, etc. This dominant position has now been taken over by a different philosophy which originated largely in Cambridge, but has now its chief centre in Oxford and has spread rapidly among universities in many parts of the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian world, though as far as I know not yet much outside these areas.

Professor B. Blanshard¹ has brought the features of the new philosophical scene into relief by contrasting the Oxford philosophy of the 1950's with that which he remembers of the Oxford of the period from 1913 when he studied there, and Mr. J. O. Urmson has written a brilliant and authoritative account of the development of the new movement between the two World Wars.²

The movement has historical roots in the tradition of British Empiricism. Hume is an important figure in its ancestry. Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, both of Cambridge, broke away from the prevailing idealism (to which both had been originally attached) in the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, and the new movement is very largely derived from them, with additional influences from the Viennese Logical Positivists (whose philosophy was introduced to English readers by A. J. Ayer in 1936), and an original genius, L. Wittgenstein. Among its representatives in England are J. Wisdom of Cambridge,³ G. Ryle,⁴ J. L. Austin, Stuart Hampshire,⁵ P. F. Strawson,⁶ D. L. Pears, G. J. Warnock,⁷ G. A. Paul, R. M. Hare,⁸ T. D. Weldon⁹ and P. H. Nowell Smith¹⁰ of Oxford.¹¹

2. Characteristics: Repudiation of Allegiance to a School

What is this philosophy? What are the tenets which its representatives hold in common? This is not a question which contemporary philosophers themselves would regard as legitimate, because they do not regard themselves as belonging to a school or as subscribing to any common tenets. "There is no official doctrine of modern philosophy. Modern philosophy is a common pursuit of illumination in certain fields."¹² "I suggest that what is new and genuinely original in contemp-

¹B. Blanshard, a lecture *The Philosophy of Analysis*, Proceedings of the British Academy, 1952.

²*Philosophical Analysis, its Development between the two World Wars*, Oxford, 1956.

³His writings are collected in two volumes, *Other Minds* and *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*, Blackwell, Oxford (1952 and 1953).

⁴*The Concept of Mind*, London, 1949. *Dilemmas*, Cambridge, 1954.

⁵*Spinoza*, Pelican, 1951.

⁶*Introduction to Logical Theory*, 1952.

⁷*Berkeley*, Pelican, 1953.

⁸*The Language of Morals*, Oxford, 1952.

⁹*States and Morals*, 1946. *The Vocabulary of Politics*, Pelican, 1953.

¹⁰*Ethics*, Pelican, 1954.

¹¹Further examples of the writings of many of the authors named will be found in the two volumes *Logic and Language*, ed. A. G. N. Flew, Blackwell, Oxford, 1951 and 1953.

¹²G. J. Warnock in a B.B.C. broadcast talk in 1955.

orary philosophy, or in the best of it, is just the fact that it offers not yet another new method or system."¹³ Whatever it may look like to an outsider, contemporary philosophers themselves regard themselves as pursuing not a certain kind of philosophy, but philosophy. They are more conscious of the differences which divide them from one another than of common characteristics. If there is any delimitation which they could accept, it would perhaps be the characteristic of being *contemporary*. Thus a volume of essays by some of the younger contemporary philosophers bears the title *Revolution in Philosophy*. This implies a clear consciousness of distinction between this philosophy and philosophy as it has been pursued, or mis-pursued, in the past: but not a consciousness that there could be alternative methods which would be legitimate in the present.

Nevertheless, my purpose in this paper is to do what contemporary philosophers themselves are reluctant to do, namely to identify in contemporary philosophy, if not common tenets, a common spirit, and to try to understand its significance as a whole.

3. "Analysis"

In spite of the reluctance to adopt a common label, sheer pressure of practical convenience favoured the introduction of a title which should be a little more informative than "contemporary" is, and the name which has been most commonly accepted for the new movement is Philosophy of Analysis.¹⁴

Writers who have used this term have warned against treating it as more than a name.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it does seem to indicate correctly some of the common features of the new philosophy, and we may start by using it as a clue.

4. Rejection of Metaphysics

The name "Analysis" gives a clue especially to some things the new philosophy is not. It rejects the notion that philosophy is to be thought of as a

¹³Stuart Hampshire, "Changing Methods in Philosophy," *Philosophy*, April, 1951, p. 144.

¹⁴Cf. the titles of the following works: *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, ed. H. Feigl and W. Sellars, New York, 1949; *Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Max Black, Ithaca, New York, 1950; *Philosophical Analysis, its development between the two World Wars*, J. O. Urmson, Oxford, 1956; *The Philosophy of Analysis*, lecture by B. Blanshard, Proceedings of the British Academy, 1952; and of the periodical *Analysis*, which appeared first in 1932.

¹⁵Thus Professor Max Black wrote in the introduction to his *Philosophical Analysis* (1950) "Instead of trying, where so many have failed, to analyse analysis, I shall confine myself to some informal comments upon the work of Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein; these may serve to recall the complexity of the recent historical background and act as a deterrent against treating 'Philosophical Analysis' as a 'school' having well-defined articles of association", and Margaret Macdonald in her introduction to *Philosophy and Analysis* (1954) wrote that the phrase "philosophical analysis" was "introduced as a technical philosophical term for the work of Moore and Russell. It was later extended to that of Wittgenstein, and is now applied to the work of any philosopher which resembles, or shows the influence of, one of these models".

means of knowing which is parallel and additional to the empirical knowledge of the sciences, history, and common sense. E.g. that while science can discover truths about the world of the senses, philosophy can discover truths about a super-sensible world. Or that, while science is concerned with the explanation of particular happenings within the natural universe, the explanation of the universe *as a whole* is something which falls outside the scope of science and in that of philosophy.¹⁶ In these and similar conceptions philosophy is thought of as though it were a sort of super-science, pursuing truth and attaining knowledge in the same way as the sciences do, but somehow freed from the limitation of a science, in not being confined to a special field, or in not being subject to empirical tests.

The conception of Analysis involves a fundamentally different view of philosophy from this. According to it, the task of philosophy is not to inform, but to clarify; not to give new knowledge by means of some faculty of speculation or intuition, but to enable me to know in a new way what I knew already. An early statement (or foreshadowing) of this view was given by G. E. Moore in his famous paper "The Philosophy of Common Sense" which was published in 1925.¹⁷

There are two senses in which we can be said to "understand what we mean." In one sense, I understand what I mean by a sentence if I can use it correctly, though I may never have reflected philosophically. E.g. a competent scientist who uses the phrase: "the light causes a blackening of the photographic plate," and a competent historian who writes: "the religious struggles culminating in the Thirty Years War had caused a widespread demand for religious toleration," certainly understand what they mean, without the need of a philosopher to tell them. And yet the philosophical analysis of the concept of cause, while not doing or undoing the work of the scientist or the historian, gives a new understanding of what they were meaning all the time.

Analysis, according to this view, is what philosophers in the past always have been doing, without realizing it, except in so far as their performance of their

¹⁶This is a view which G. E. Moore held in 1910. See his *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 1-2. "It seems to me that the most important and interesting thing which philosophers have tried to do is no less than this; namely: To give a general description of the *whole* of the Universe, mentioning all the most important kinds of things which we *know* to be in it, considering how far it is likely that there are in it important kinds of things which we do not absolutely *know* to be in it, and also considering the most important ways in which these various kinds of things are related to one another. I will call all this for short, 'Giving a general description of the *whole* Universe', and hence will say that the first and most important problem of philosophy is : To give a general description of the *whole* Universe."

¹⁷In *Contemporary British Philosophy*, ed. Muirhead, Second Series. Moore writes: "I am not at all sceptical as to the *truth* of such propositions as 'The earth has existed for many years past', 'Many human bodies have each lived for many years upon it', i.e. propositions which assert the existence of material things: on the contrary, I hold that we all know, with certainty, many such propositions to be true. But I am very sceptical as to what, in certain respects, the correct *analysis* of such propositions is," p. 216.

task has been distorted by their own misconceptions of what the task of philosophy is.

5. *Linguistic Analysis*

What does philosophy analyze? Moore says it analyzes Common Sense. But how do I get access to the datum which is to be analyzed? An older English tradition would have said: By looking into my own mind and consulting my own consciousness. Locke appeals to this datum in the following words: "I ask anyone, whether he be not invincibly conscious to himself of a different perception when he looks on the sun by day, and thinks on it by night,"¹⁸ and the use of the term Common Sense still as it is used by Moore implies this possibility of consulting an inward authority. But modern philosophers deny such access to an inward oracle. In their view my only access to a man's meaning is through what he says, i.e., the datum of analysis is *language*, and this is what philosophy is concerned with.

6. *Logical Empiricism and Ordinary Language*

To think of philosophy as concerned with the meaning of words is not entirely an innovation. Socrates, who founded the tradition of European philosophy, devoted his inquiry to the search for definitions, asking such questions as: "What is justice?" "What is virtue?" But he assumed that each word had a single true meaning, if one could discover it, and that the philosopher's business was to elucidate this, transcending the varied and confused versions of it current among ordinary men. The modern analyst renounces this ideal. He sees it as his business to elucidate not "the true" meaning of words, but the meaning which language actually has in the mouths of those who use it. If common usage fluctuates, let him trace the fluctuations; it is not his business to establish for a word¹⁹ a single unchanging meaning (which in fact in actual use it never has!) but to analyze the meanings which it has in actual use.²⁰

Hence "ordinary language," instead of being thought of as something imperfect, which philosophy supersedes, remains as the datum which philosophy has to analyze.²¹

¹⁸Essay concerning Human Understanding. Bk. IV, ch. ii.

¹⁹Actually analytical philosophers are concerned rather with the meanings of sentences than of single words. This is another characteristic, which I mention only in passing.

²⁰This empirical attitude is expressed in Wittgenstein's famous directive, "Don't look for the meaning, look for the use". "Don't look for the meaning" — otherwise you will fall under the influence of the old Socratic assumption that there is something which can be called *the* meaning of a word; "look for the use" — i.e. for the ways in which it is actually used.

²¹Analysis of ordinary language is one of the directions which contemporary philosophy takes, and is that with which this paper is principally concerned. Another is the attempt of formal logicians to construct a logically perfect language.

7. *Therapeutic Clarification*

It would be wrong to think that this is necessarily a matter of trivial importance (though, as with other philosophies, it is possible to pursue it in a trivial spirit). Logical analysis has been compared²² to the task of the psychoanalyst. It is the work of revealing a man to himself. The gain to be derived from this may be thought of in terms of an increase in intellectual mastery. The tools are sharpened, and mistakes made in the past may be avoided in the future. Perhaps most contemporary philosophers tend to see it like this. But it can be seen differently. It may be part of the task of enabling a man to face and accept what it is that he believes, liberating him from dogmas which he could no longer wholly accept, but which haunted him because he had not faced them.²³

8. *Philosophy of Analysis and Logical Positivism*

Contemporary philosophy is identified in the popular mind with "Logical Positivism." This is the name given to the philosophy of a group of Austrian philosophers (the "Vienna Circle"), which was introduced to the English-reading public by A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* in 1936. Its basic doctrine is that (apart from the tautological statements of logic and mathematics) a statement can have literal meaning only if it is empirically verifiable. This implies that the statements of logic, mathematics, natural science, and history are to be accepted as meaningful: but that aesthetic, ethical, metaphysical, and theological "statements," whatever emotional value they may have, are to be regarded as being literally nonsense.

Contemporary philosophers hotly repudiate the identification of their philosophy with Logical Positivism, and for a critic to fail to distinguish them from it is to forfeit at the outset any claim to be taken seriously by them. "I am not," said Mr. G. J. Warnock in a broadcast talk in 1955, "nor is any philosopher of my acquaintance, a Logical Positivist." What is repudiated in Logical Positivism is its "restrictive iconoclasm," its *restriction* of meaning to empirically verifiable statements, and its pejorative designation of other classes of statements as nonsensical. The contemporary philosopher is catholic, while the Logical Positivist discriminated. He accepts *every* use of language as worthy of unprejudiced examination. Each will be shown to exhibit a logic of its own, which it is the philosopher's business to elicit, and ethical statements (e.g.) in being *different* from scientific statements are not therefore *worse*.

I confess, for myself, that I think nevertheless that "Logical Positivism" would be not at all a bad name for contemporary British Philosophy. "Positivism"

²²By Professor H. A. Hodges.

²³As Professor Ryle was haunted by the dogma of the "ghost in the machine." See *The Concept of Mind*, p. 9.

seems to me to indicate its distinctive feature better than "Analysis" does, and the difference which I have just been describing could be safeguarded by distinguishing British Positivism from the earlier Viennese form (in a somewhat similar way to that in which J. S. Mill distinguished his form of Utilitarianism from his father's and Bentham's without discarding the name). It is true that Oxford has broken through the Viennese restriction in respect of *meaning* (it does not confine meaning within the limits marked by the Verification Principle), but has it broken through the parallel restriction in respect of *truth*? Does it admit as *true* any statement outside those classes of statement which the Viennese philosophers marked off as meaningful? ²⁴ But I shall continue in this paper to use Logical Positivism of the Viennese doctrine and Philosophy of Analysis of the contemporary one.

9. *Christian Faith in the Light of Contemporary Philosophy*

This philosophy clearly presents problems to Christian believers. To some students who come to the university from a Christian environment in home or school it can present itself as a challenge to their faith itself.

The challenge of Logical Positivism is obvious. If its division of statements into the meaningless and the nonsensical is accepted, theological statements will fall into the latter class. The challenge of the philosophy of analysis (or "Logical Empiricism") is more subtle and perhaps more penetrating. Starting from a recognition of the *difference* which separates theological from scientific statements, it inquires (or at least invites inquiry) into the peculiar character of the former. This is a new inquiry, because it is a new ²⁵ idea, to believers as well as to unbelievers, that theological statements have any *peculiar* character at all. Archbishop Ussher, e.g. in *dating* the Creation in 4004 B. C., assumed that it was an historical event, i.e., that the logic of the statement "God created the world" is the same as that of the statement "Julius Caesar invaded Britain." Is this not perhaps a lesson which Christians are to learn from the new philosophy: *viz.* that a statement of faith is something different from an historical statement or a scientific one and different again from a metaphysical one in the sense which metaphysics bears in the tradition of European philosophy? If Christian philosophers have been forced to ask: What then is the special nature of statements of faith? ²⁶ have they not been forced into a reflection which is salutary and was needed from a Christian point of view?

²⁴I return to this question later in this paper. See p. 192 below.

²⁵I don't mean *brand* new. Classical Christian theology has recognized it, as the doctrine of "Analogy" bears witness. But perhaps we needed to have it brought home to us afresh.

²⁶Usually referred to in philosophical discussions as "theological statements." This term is correct enough, but can be dangerous if it misleads us into thinking that the problem is only that of elucidating the (professional) *theologian's* use of language.

The debate which has so far proceeded between philosophers of analysis and Christian philosophers and theologians has started from the basis which I have tried to indicate: on the side of the philosophers of analysis there is the new willingness to investigate the logic of theological statements without prejudging them to be meaningless, on the side of the Christian philosopher there is, or surely ought to be, a desire to discover the logical nature of the statements in which he expresses his faith. Some documents of this debate are collected in Flew and McIntyre's book *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (1955); the best critical appreciation of the state of the discussion which I know is that of Mr. B. G. Mitchell in his paper "Christianity and Modern Empiricism," which was given to this Institute in April, 1953; the most enlightening contribution to it from the Christian standpoint which I know is Mr. I. M. Crombie's Socratic paper on "Theology and Falsification."²⁷

It is not my main purpose in this paper to continue this debate, but I venture to offer two suggestions before I pass on from it.

(i) From all that has been said so far, it might seem that there is no necessity, nor even possibility, of conflict between Christian belief and contemporary philosophy. If contemporary philosophy does not claim to set up a "world-view" (as e.g. the materialist philosophies of nature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did) which is incompatible with that of Christianity nor set up a standard of reason by which to judge theological argument, nor a standard of meaning by which to condemn it as meaningless; if it contents itself with examining the logic of what believers and theologians in fact say, without questioning their right to say it, how can there be any conflict between them? The conclusion that there can be no conflict here is commonly acceptable to the analytic philosopher, but is baffling to the Christian, who feels obscurely that there ought to be a point of conflict, but is unable to locate it.

On this I should like to press a point which has been made already by Mr. Mitchell,²⁸ but which analytical philosophers, so far as I know, are slow to take up. These philosophers assume that when they have conceded meaningfulness to theological statements they have conceded everything which can be demanded. But a Christian has to claim for his statements of faith not only that they are meaningful but that they are *true*. If he insists on following out what is involved in *this* conviction, I suspect that he will find that the situation of conflict has been restored.

(ii) Mr. Mitchell rejects on this ground (rightly, in my opinion) the philosophies which would interpret theological statements as something other than

²⁷Published in "The Socratic" No. 5, Oxford (Blackwell), 1952; reprinted in Flew & McIntyre, *op. cit.*, pp. 109 ff.

²⁸In the paper cited, p. 89.

assertions — e.g. as expressions of attitudes to life, policies for living, pre-suppositions. If they were any of *these* things, they would not be capable of being falsified nor verified, i.e., would not be the sort of statements which are capable of being true. Mr. Mitchell therefore himself wishes to revert to the position that they are assertions in the ordinary sense — i.e., in the sense in which the assertions of science and history are so — while he safeguards the distinction between theological statements and factual statements of these other kinds by appealing to the principle of the doctrine of analogy, according to which predicates *change their sense* when they are applied to God.

I would like to see what is perhaps in some respects the same fundamental truth expressed in a different idiom. The doctrine of analogy thinks of theological statements as statements which we make about God. This is consonant with the Greek conception of theology, according to which theology is that part of philosophy which is directed towards God, or the divine, as its object (as "geology" is the study of the earth, "physiology" the study of nature, etc.). Etymologically this meaning is embedded in the Greek-derived words "theology," "theological," which we still use. But their meaning has changed (though perhaps we are not wholly conscious of the change) under the impact of influences which are other than Greek. "Theology" is for us no longer a branch of philosophy, but is a study contrasted with philosophy. To call an argument or inquiry "theological" no longer means that it has God as its object; it means that it is based upon divine revelation, not solely upon reason. If we are clear that *this* is what theological statements are, then the task of logic in respect to theology will be conceived differently. It will no longer investigate the logic of statement about God, but that of *revelatory* statements. Mr. David Jenkins of Oxford has suggested in some unpublished talks that the task of logical analysis should be conceived in these terms, and this seems to me the proper approach.

10. *Contemporary Philosophy in the Light of Christian Faith*

Though it is salutary and may be good training to bat on the opponents' wicket, the basic question for a Christian must be, not "What does Christian doctrine look like when seen from the point of view of contemporary philosophy?" but, "How is contemporary philosophy to be understood in the light of Christian faith?"

There is a difficulty here, which I do not know how to remove. How can a writer, though a Christian, claim that *his* point of view is the view of the Christian faith? Must not such an identification reduce Christian philosophy to a school or philosophy among other schools? Whereas in fact must we not expect that Christians who philosophize will fall into a great variety of schools? In face of

²⁹Newman was presumably using the word in this sense when he said "Theology is science of God."

these considerations, it seems that Christians too must follow the example of contemporary philosophers of Analysis in renouncing attachment to a school. What will distinguish them will be an allegiance of faith which is compatible with a variety (though not of course with all varieties) of schools.

The question will then arise: Is another allegiance discernible in the writings of contemporary philosophers and underlying the variety of opinions which is in conflict with that of Christian faith? Such an allegiance need not be consistently maintained, nor maintained in conscious opposition to Christian faith, since it will probably never have been recognized as being a position to which, within philosophy, an alternative exists.

It seems to me that there is such another allegiance, that there is a spirit abroad which inspires many at least of the diverse manifestations of contemporary philosophy. I shall try to delineate it, and shall illustrate what I say by quotations from contemporary philosophers; but I shall not assert that any of them is wholly to be identified with it, nor claim that any of us is wholly free from it.

This spirit shows itself in a demand for clarity, and in the assumption that this demand can always be met. Or rather (since all philosophy has been in a sense a search for clarity, and has assumed that it is to be had) the distinctive character of contemporary philosophy is its demand for clarity of a particular kind. It demands a clarity from which the mysterious has been excluded, and assumes "that nothing is really puzzling and that therefore there cannot be anything unclear that we can legitimately want to say."³⁰

"Nothing is really puzzling" means "Nothing is really mysterious." Just as in the realm of science "mystery" designates only what has *not yet* been explained, and it is assumed that the mystery will be eliminated as science advances, so in philosophy mystery is only obscurity which has not yet been clarified.

The following are examples of this demand and this assumption. "There is no unfathomable mystery in the world."³¹ Professor Margaret Macdonald said of the periodical *Analysis* that it is "hospitable to many points of view, *so long as they are definite and clearly stated.*"³² As long ago as 1903 G. E. Moore wrote in his preface to *Principia Ethica*: "It appears to me that in Ethics, as in all other philosophical studies, the difficulties and disagreements of which its history is full are mainly due to a very simple cause; namely, to the attempt to answer questions without first discovering *what* question it is that you desire to answer."

This passage was cited both by Professor John Wisdom and by Susan Stebbing

³⁰This sentence is quoted from a letter of Mr. I. M. Crombie. It was he who made plain to me that clarity (not analysis) is the distinguishing characteristic of the contemporary philosophical spirit with which I am here concerned.

³¹M. Schlick, "Meaning and Verification," in Feigl and Sellars, *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, p. 156.

³²*Philosophy and Analysis*. Introduction, p. 1, my italics.

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in their contributions to *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore*.³³ Professor Stebbing's comment is especially apt to my present purpose; she writes, "To think is to be asking oneself questions and seeking to find the answers to them: hence to think clearly it is necessary to see exactly *what* the question is to which one wants an answer."

If thinking is this, thought must end in the elimination of mystery. This is to demand that the answer shall be cast in terms which we have specified beforehand, and this implies that the truth of the matter is not such as to exceed the measure of our understanding. It is to claim a mastery of the human intellect over the subject of investigation.

A similar mastery over nature was claimed when the experimental method was introduced into natural science at the beginning of the modern period. The essence of this method is that by it nature is compelled to answer questions *framed by man*. This is the meaning of Bacon's famous phrase about "Putting nature to the question," as Kant saw and explained 150 years later.³⁴ The method of experiment distinguishes modern science from the contemplative study of nature conceived by the Greeks and medieval scholastics. It is a means to man's achievement of mastery over nature in the technical sense,³⁵ but in a subtler sense the application of the method itself, even apart from the practical application of its results in technology, is a claim of mastery for the human intellect over the processes of nature. It is a claim that there is nothing ultimately mysterious in nature, no truth in it to be revealed which would exceed the possibility of being expressed in terms of the answer to a question framed by man beforehand.³⁶

If I am right, the philosophical spirit which we are considering is parallel to this spirit of natural science.³⁷ It rests on similar claims for human reason, and is inspired by a similar ambition for human dominion.

³³Ed. P. Schilp; *Wisdom*, p. 421, Stebbing, pp. 518-19.

³⁴*Critique of Pure Reason*. Preface to Second Edition; B xii-xiii, E. Tr. Kemp Smith, pp. 19-20; though Kant, characteristically, speaks of "reason" not of "man" as putting questions to nature. For a modern statement of this characteristic of natural science cf. Mary Hesse, *Science and the Human Imagination*, pp. 35-6.

³⁵As the prophets of this movement proclaimed. Bacon said knowledge is power, and the principal part of his *Novum Organum* bears the title *Aphorismi de Interpretatione Naturae et Regno Hominis*. Descartes claimed to introduce a new physic which would make men "the lords and possessors of nature." (*Discourse on Method*, Pt. VI, Everyman ed. p. 49.)

³⁶It may be that some recent developments in physics are bringing about a modification of their claim within science itself (Quantum mechanics, Indeterminacy Principle). I have no competence to assess their significance. But they do not reintroduce mystery into nature in the old sense of those for whom nature was divine.

³⁷I would not be taken to imply that this method in natural science is wrong. Man is commanded to subdue the earth in Genesis 1; cf. Psalm 8.

11. *An Alternative Conception of Philosophy*

To deny mystery is not to deny the existence of anything which is beyond the comprehension of human intellect. It is to deny the possibility of *saying* anything about what exceeds the comprehension of human intellect. "What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak, thereof must one be silent."³⁸ This is to deny not God, but Revelation; or more accurately, it is to deny that language can be the vehicle of revealed truth.

Revelation is of mystery, but mystery revealed is not eliminated, but remains mysterious. It remains object of wonder, which is dispelled when mystery is eliminated. There is no method by which revelation can be commanded: "it is" (in the Bible) "not a thing to be procured from God by any technique."³⁹ That is to say, it is not subject to human mastery.

I have argued elsewhere⁴⁰ that Greek philosophy, in its main tradition, was a philosophy of revelation. It was based on the assumption that Nature or Being, which was itself divine, disclosed itself to the contemplating intellect.⁴¹ Hence philosophy on the Greek conception not only originates in wonder (as both Plato and Aristotle say it does), but ends in wonder.

The notion of philosophy as revelational excludes the notion which we found to be assumed in contemporary philosophy, that philosophical doctrines are to be thought of as answers to questions or solutions of problems.⁴² Revelation is *prevenient* to our problems. The truth here is similar to that expressed by Karl Jaspers, as quoted by Mr. Mitchell: "A proved God is no God. Accordingly, only he who starts from God can seek him. A certainty of the Existence of God, however rudimentary and intangible it may be, is a premise, not a result of philosophical activity."⁴³

Revelation is of a mystery. A question which specifies the terms in which

³⁸Wittgenstein, in the Preface to *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* (1921; E. Tr. 1922). Cf. *ibid.*, 6.522: "Everything which can be known, can be expressed in the propositions of science. Besides that, there is the mystical, which is inexpressible."

³⁹*A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson, s.v. "Reveal".

⁴⁰In the book already mentioned, ch. 2.

⁴¹"*Aletheia*," the Greek term meaning "truth," is used to denote this character of Being, the character, namely, of disclosing itself fully. The word is derived etymologically from roots meaning "not remaining hidden." M. Heidegger paraphrases it as "*Die Unverborgenheit des Seienden*" ("the unhiddenness of the real").

⁴²As examples of this assumption, compare the following: "All philosophers must take account of the same facts; of particularity and repetition, physical objects and minds, moral and aesthetic values, necessary and contingent truth, etc. What is important is whether they satisfactorily explain these facts, or such of them as they consider; *whether they solve philosophical problems*, not whether they use one trick, or wave one banner, rather than another." Margaret Macdonald, *Philosophy and Analysis*, Introduction, p. 7. My italics.

⁴³Jaspers, *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, p. 36; quoted by B. G. Mitchell, *loc. cit.*, p. 93.

an answer is to be given, determines in advance that it shall not be mysterious, because mystery, when revealed, exceeds what we could have anticipated.

Gabriel Marcel has distinguished between "problems" and "mysteries": science for him is concerned with problems, metaphysics with mysteries. It is a mistake to try to turn mystery into problem. Problems are solved by the application of technique, whereas a mystery transcends every conceivable technique. The sphere of techniques is the sphere of man's achievement, whereas mysteries are subjects of revelation.⁴⁴

The conception of philosophy against which contemporary British philosophy is in revolt is a conception of philosophy as revelation. In the case of the continental idealist philosophers, it is obvious that they conceived their role in this way. The pictures and interpretations of the universe which they give differ from religious revelations only in the claim that they have been received through the vehicle of reason. But this revelational exercise of reason was not confined to those Rationalist philosophers who produced metaphysical speculations on the grand scale. It extended also to the sober philosophers of the British Empiricist tradition. Thus Locke says, "Reason is natural revelation."⁴⁵

This claimed *revelatory* function of reason — this seems to be essentially what contemporary philosophy rejects; and I cannot defend it (although I was myself brought up in a philosophy based upon it, of which no doubt I bear the traces still). In this paper I wish to defend the idea of a philosophy based upon revelation, but not of a philosophy based upon *natural* revelation. Natural revelation is open to attack from two sides, not from one only; not only from the side of those who reject revelation as a means of knowledge, but from the viewpoint of a different conception of revelation.

This different viewpoint is expressed in the words of Canon T. R. Milford, in the preface to his book *Foolishness to the Greeks*.⁴⁶

This book expounds a definite point of view, which might be called "Christian Realism", in the sense in which Kraemer speaks of Biblical Realism. It tries to interpret life and the world from a position inside the historical body whose centre is Christ. It invites others to stand where we stand and to see if they can see what we see.

"It invites others to stand where we stand, and to see if they can see what we see." Yes; but it does not assume that what can be seen from here must be equally visible to others from where they at present are. Such thinking will be theological, not in the etymological sense of that word, but in the sense which it

⁴⁴For all this see Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence* and *Being and Having*; in the latter volume especially the "Metaphysical Diary" (which was written between 1928 and 1933).

⁴⁵*Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. IV, ch. xix, 4.

⁴⁶London, 1953.

has now come most commonly to bear:⁴⁷ the sense, namely, of *apocryptological*, or "based on revelation," where it is assumed that the revelation is communicated, not universally to all men through their reason, but through the Spirit indwelling a certain community. "Armchair revelation" is suspect from this point of view, as much as armchair speculation is from the point of view of the scientist.

Wittgenstein is said once to have described what he did as "one of the heirs of the subject which used to be called philosophy."⁴⁸ It is as though different elements which were held in solution in the traditional philosophy have now been precipitated. Perhaps natural science is one, and linguistic analysis another. Certainly theology is another such element, and if it did not already enjoy a better title, could put in its own claim to be "one of the heirs."

⁴⁷See p. 193 above.

⁴⁸Quoted by M. Macdonald, *Philosophy and Analysis*, p. 11.

Three Types and Two Dogmas of Empiricism

JOHN E. SMITH

A topic that has never been far from the center of discussion in modern thought may be indicated in a vague and preliminary way by the question: What is Experience? It is no secret among philosophers that the concept of experience is a many-sided one and that the appeal to experience, though frequently if not universally made, is very far indeed from being an appeal to something the meaning of which is either very clear or evident. The fact is that there have been many appeals to experience, or perhaps better, appeals to many different experiences, in the course of philosophical thought; and this plurality suggests the need, first, of a critical analysis enabling us to distinguish one from the other and, secondly, of a critical theory making it possible to judge the relative merits of the candidates. It may of course be objected that an appeal to experience is not at the same time an appeal to a *theory* of experience, and it may be said that it is possible to make an appeal to experience without paying any attention whatever to a theory of experience. This objection is to a degree justified, and to the extent that it is justified it belongs to the same class as the contention that we can walk down the stairs without knowing or making any appeal to physiological or mechanical theory. But over against that objection stands the counter difficulty that an appeal to experience in support of some contention is not a mere doing such as walking down the stairs obviously is. Such an appeal to experience is a theoretical activity; it is an appeal to restricted or critical experience and thus to a selected content which is controlled by some theory as to what is to count as experience. In this regard a world of pure experience is a world of pure nonsense from a critical standpoint; the criteria or bounding conditions defining what is to count as experience and especially the limits of experience will not themselves be more experience in the same sense, even if experience is not entirely excluded from their discovery and determination. The conclusion is that every empiricism contains a theory of experience, a fact which makes every appeal to experience problematic and shows that a critical account of experience is unavoidable. Experience is not self-interpreting.

The first part of the succeeding discussion will be devoted to a brief exposi-

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The title of this essay was suggested by two papers referred to in the succeeding discussion, Dewey's "An Empirical Survey of Empiricisms" and "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" by W. V. Quine. The present essay was read, with some modifications, at a meeting of the New York Philosophy Club, October 1956.

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tion of three types of empiricism and to an indication of their relative merits. I shall then suggest that so-called logical empiricism, though not itself among the three, is a continuation of one of these conceptions. Following that I want to consider a recent and influential criticism of this empiricism which has been advanced by W. V. Quine from what is described as "a logical point of view" in order to discover whether it is possible to correct the errors involved in it by changing the scope of the ideas that are to be brought to the test of experience. Behind the entire discussion is the question: In exactly what form does experience confront a claim to knowledge and exactly how do we assess the relation between the perceptual and conceptual poles present in all attempts to know reality?

I

In a most instructive but much neglected paper entitled, "An Empirical Survey of Empiricisms"¹ Dewey called attention to "three historic conceptions of experience" standing behind the distinct forms of philosophical empiricism to be encountered in western thought. And although not every significant conception of experience is introduced into Dewey's schema (for example, Kant's conception is not provided for, nor are more recent accounts stemming from phenomenology and derivatives), it does furnish us with such basic possibilities that for any given theory we can locate it as belonging to one of the three general types. We shall see that this is particularly true of modern logical empiricism. I shall take my cue in this first part from Dewey's analysis, but I do not intend the discussion to be of historical importance alone, and consequently he is released from all responsibility for what will be maintained here.

The three types of empiricism are *first*, the conception of *ἐμπειρία* formed in classical antiquity and associated chiefly with Aristotle; *secondly*, the conception which has come to be called classical and which is associated with the eighteenth century British thinkers, Locke and Hume; and *thirdly*, the conception formed in the present century and originally associated with the pragmatic movement. The main feature of each type may now be characterized as a prelude to a critical comparison between them.

1. *The Ancient or Aristotelian Type*

In his *Metaphysics* (980b-981b) Aristotle describes experience as the result of numerous encounters of the same thing on different occasions and takes it to be a particular judgment or knowledge of particular fact dependent upon sense perception and memory. In so far as experience is thus based upon a series of repeti-

¹See *Studies in the History of Ideas*, ed. The Department of Philosophy of Columbia University, Vol. III. New York: Columbia University Press, 1935, pp. 3-22.

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tions it is dependent upon the past and must be taken as a cumulative affair approaching the proportions of an historical report. Although in the *Posterior Analytics* (II. 19) Aristotle stresses the universal element which is contained in the repeated instances and even puts the acquisition of a stable universal down to experience, it is still the case that experience remains within the sphere of particular fact. It is neither art (although it moves by a continuous process into art) nor science, because as report of fact it does not contain within itself any reason (*αἰτία*) for the fact. Experience is thus a *record* of past perceptions whether of facts, events, or results of practice, and it is independent of any theoretical framework which might serve to explain and interpret the content of these perceptions. Moreover, as a record of remembered instances, experience must be taken as basically historical or funded information over a period of time.

Of the greatest significance for present purposes is the fact that whereas experience in this sense was set off against and contrasted with science (*ἐπιστήμη*) or knowledge proper, it was not taken as a final court of appeal for the testing of theoretical knowledge. That is to say, experience was accorded an importance in relation to *practice* — the man of knowledge without experience will not succeed in the sphere of art (*τέχνη*) — but sense perception was not allowed to function as the final test of the most worthy object of knowledge, reasons and causes.² Experience as accumulated information tended to be taken as inferior to *ἐπιστήμη* or rational knowledge proper. This point is of considerable importance since the second type of empiricism exactly reverses this relationship.

²The theory of experience in Aristotle is of course a much more complex affair than can be considered here. For the purpose of this discussion it is sufficient to stress the priority of rational knowledge of causes over that knowledge gained through sense perception alone in order to sharpen the contrast between the ancient theory of experience and the classical or Enlightenment conception. Aristotle's assertion that "a number of memories constitute a single experience" (*Post. Anal.* 100a. 5) is sufficient to establish the thesis that experience for him is a cumulative or funded affair based upon past instances. It is true, however, that sense perception in his thought has a dual significance that complicates the matter; on the one hand, sense perception is always of the particular, but on the other hand its content is said to be universal, i.e., out of a series of particular perceptions the implicit universal or form emerges (*Post. Anal.* 100a. 17-100b. 1). This would mean that knowledge of universals cannot be divorced from or set over against the situation of sense perception. Moreover in so far as first principles are known by induction and not demonstration, the body of knowledge we do possess concerning the world is ultimately based upon matters of fact (note especially the last sentence of *Post. Anal.*). But over against this there are two crucial considerations which serve to show that experience is not the final test of a knowledge claim as it came to be in the classical view. First, there is Aristotle's famous dictum that ultimate premises are prior and better known than any conclusion, a certainty not the result of sense perception *alone*. And secondly, the more important doctrine that knowledge proper is always knowledge of *causes*; as *Post. Anal.* 87b. 27 ff. shows, the act of perception does not yield knowledge of causes. The point most germane to the present discussion is that in Aristotle there is no reductive appeal to sense perception or experience as the final arbiter of all knowledge claims.

2. *Classical or Enlightenment Type*

In order to illustrate empiricism of this type, Dewey chose Locke as the classic example. I would have chosen Hume instead upon the ground that this general conception of experience appears in his thought in purer form (in Locke, for example, the phenomenalism is not yet fully attained), but it matters little since it is the main drift that we are after and for that either Locke, Berkeley, or Hume would serve. There are four characteristics to be cited here, the first of which marks the sharp divergence of this type from the Greek conception.

a) Experience is conceived in such a way as to make it possible for it to function as a critical or normative standard both for clarity and for truth. Far from being a mere preliminary stage in a hierarchically conceived structure and process of knowledge, experience is now the touchstone of all cognitive claims. If ancient thought saw in the individual case only the occasion for the exhibition of the universal form that is the proper object of knowledge, the situation is here reversed. All terms of universal or at least general import and all statements containing such terms must be brought to the test of direct experience or confrontation with fact and, as is well known, the principal characteristic of such experience is that it is thoroughly individual or singular. This contrast determined the course of classical empiricism from the beginning. Howsoever that may be, the essential point is that on this view experience has a normative status and retains a superiority over all supposedly rational knowledge.

b) Experience becomes a domain or subject matter with a singular nature of its own; it is uniquely identified with the materials of sense or with what can be sensed and, at times, with the very sensations themselves. The situation of perception is analyzed in such a way that sense gives us not only what is everlastingly singular, but it gives us as well ultimate, simple, sensed units from which everything else is to be constructed. So conceived, experience can stand in but one relation to thought or reason at large and that is the relation of "other than" and, further, this relation is itself interpreted as meaning a complete denial of any element in common between the two. Experience confronts thought as a contrasting domain without overlap. It is to this characteristic of the classical view that we shall have to return later on; the two dogmas of empiricism discussed by Quine find their beginning at just this point.

c) A direct consequence of the preceding characteristic is one which, though of the first importance in itself, need not concern us very much, and it may merely be mentioned. When experience is identified with sense and it is discovered that the purported objects of experience can be conceived from the standpoint of physical theory in a manner contrasting sharply with the reports received by the senses, the irresistible temptation is to assign to sense the status of what is imme-

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diately apprehended by the mind. This is in fact what happened in the eighteenth century and experience became a mental content; objective reference faded if not into insignificance at least into great uncertainty, and mathematical science found that it had been bequeathed sole rights to the possession of the external world. Experience became a private affair and, as later development has shown, the recovery of its publicity — where such recovery has been possible at all — has required considerable outlay of logical capital.

d) The contrast between sense and reason was bound to have its effect not only upon the conception of experience, but upon the conception of thought as well. This leads to the final characteristic of this type and one that most clearly reveals its distinction from the ancient type. As over against the approach of many of the ancients for whom reason was the ultimate criterion of both knowledge and reality, Hume, particularly, maintained a most narrow conception of reason and one which virtually denied to it any power of synthetic inference. The full implication of his view is to be seen in Mill's doctrine that empirical inference is from particular to particular without the need for any universal in between. The consequence is that experience is deprived of the possibility of revealing any pattern or stable structure within itself, and in order to attain such pattern it becomes necessary to appeal to reason. The latter has however already been reduced to the proportions of a wholly subjective power of human nature; it is cut off from experience at the same time that it is somehow supposed to be able to think it, to arrange it, and to know it. Reason itself is viewed as possessing the power of apodeictic inference only when it confines itself to relations of ideas and says nothing whatever about matters of fact, i.e., experience. In relation to experience reason becomes only a shorthand form for the expression of actual conjunctions between ideas. Rational connections become the property of logicians.

It would appear that it is just to this doctrine that we must look for the origin of all later views which isolate the rational component — whether in the form of formal logic or of linguistic structures — from the sensible material that is called experience. Repeated emphasis upon the separation has driven logic further and further away from the concrete world it is to know. Those who are too acute to attempt any derivation of mathematics and logic from experience, in the sense of the repeated singulars of the classical conception, are left with no alternative in their zeal to save these disciplines from empiricist dissolution but to invent a region apart from the concrete world which is peopled with logical forms and, above all, propositions. In one case reason is lost because it is completely dissolved into experience and becomes a mere shorthand formulation of sense instances, and in the other reason is deprived of any intelligible relation to the world disclosed in experience because it purchases its apodeictic character at the price of remaining in a world closed to matters of fact. The history of the analytic-synthetic distinction in recent thought illustrates the point very well.

3. *The inclusive or reconstructive type*

If the first type of empiricism takes experience as funded information and the second emphasizes the critical or normative function of sense, the third type may be described as reconstructive or as an attempt to broaden the scope of experience not only in order to recover for experience a great deal omitted by the classical type but also to criticize that type and to overcome some of its objectionable features. Historically this third type is associated with the pragmatic approach, although there have been many modern thinkers not legitimately describable as pragmatists — Bradley and Husserl for example — who were or are engaged in correcting classical empiricism and in seeking to formulate a broader or reconstructive view.

This type has three main features. First, experience is taken as an affair related to the self in *all* of its aspects, and this means that it is not, as in the case of the other types, uniquely a matter of knowledge nor is it acquired by the self only in the course of the quest for knowledge. Instead experience is what takes place for a concrete, living, believing, acting self when it has dealings with other selves and with the world at large. Thus this type breaks with the assumption that experience is either a stopping place on the road to certainty or that it is exhausted in its function as a criterion of knowledge. Secondly, the description of experience as the having of singular, simple, and clear-cut sense data is rejected as false. The elements believed to constitute experience according to the classical conception are now regarded not as the primary, indubitable elements of knowledge but as the result of analysis and thus as neither primitive nor altogether verifiable as such in direct encounter. Thirdly and for present purposes most important of all, the absolute contrast between experience and thought is abandoned. Experience is no longer to be thought of as a subject matter possessing a single nature — sense — forming a closed domain different in kind from thought, but is instead conceived as the life and career of an organic being. In so far as such a being is capable of coming into contact with or of encountering all the constituents of its world, the experience resulting will prove to be as rich as the world itself. Experience will turn out to be nature as encountered with the emphasis falling upon the publicly verifiable aspects of the encounter and away from what is discoverable only within the confines of the individual or private consciousness.

Before proceeding to explicit critical comparison between the three types briefly outlined, it is necessary to call attention to an unavoidable difficulty. If we accept the contention of the third view that experience is not exclusively an affair of knowledge but rather the intercourse of a many-sided self with a complex world, we might be led to concentrate on all the so-called non-cognitive aspects or functions of experience and abandon to those who do take experience as knowledge the task of determining how it is to figure in the attainment of knowledge. But this abandoning of the theory of cognition and knowledge to those who view expe-

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rience as nothing more than the subject matter or criterion of natural science while concentrating on the non-cognitive, leads to just the sort of dualism and division that has plagued modern philosophy with its opposition between the cognitive and the emotive. The point is that we must uphold the view that experience is not exclusively an affair of knowledge (if knowledge is to be taken in the sense in which physics is knowledge), but we must not admit that those for whom experience is primarily such an affair have exclusive rights to the determination of its cognitive function. Consequently, whereas a most important philosophical task at present is the further development of the theory of experience so that it will be adequate for morality, religion, art, and political life rather than for science alone, the fact remains that so much of modern discussion still centers upon the cognitive role of experience. My conviction is that it will not do to hand the determination of that role over to those who believe that a theory of experience is adequate as soon as it is known that it suffices for science.

We may now turn back from this digression with the comment that a full, critical comparison between the three types leading to a new theory of experience is beyond the scope of the present discussion. Instead we may profitably confine attention to the following two considerations: first, what is the relation of thought to experience at large? and secondly, what is the nature of the critical function exercised by experience when it is admitted to be a valid touchstone for thought? The second consideration will be recognized as the principal question behind Professor Quine's recent examination of empiricism.

As regards the first consideration, it is clear that the first and third conceptions maintain a doctrine of intelligible continuity between experience and thought, whereas a radical discontinuity marks the second conception. In neither the ancient nor the reconstructive type is experience ever allowed to appear as totally other than thought, which means that in neither of these conceptions is there any such thing as bare or uninterpreted experience on one side standing over against well-formed conceptions or judgments on the other. And this agreement between the two holds despite the fact that in the ancient conception experience is but a lower stage in the knowledge process, whereas for the reconstructive view it has no such subordinate status. The classical conception, in contradistinction to the other two types, maintains a difference in kind between experience and thought and assumes that in order for experience to be available as a critical standard it must be set in thoroughgoing contrast to all ideas that might apprehend, understand, and interpret it. In short the classical conception has bequeathed to all modern thought the unrelieved dualism between a bare experience stemming exclusively from sense on the one hand and reason or more recently logic, language, and formal systems on the other. The problem has been to explain how one can know the other or how one can confirm or disconfirm the other, and thus far all solutions have had to be worked out under the added difficulty that the "other" in question is always at the same time the "wholly other." The dis-

continuity in question has led to the difficulties treated by Professor Quine in his "Two Dogmas."

As regards the second consideration — what is the nature of the critical function exercised by experience? — the ancient type of empiricism may be left to one side since what is valid in it has been retained by the reconstructive view and attention may be directed to the other two types. Both allow to experience the right to sit in judgment upon all claims to knowledge. If we simplify the matter and identify the reconstructive view of experience with that of the pragmatic approach, the first point to notice is that while this view does grant to experience a critical cognitive function, it has refused to admit that there is any single or unique relation obtaining between thought and the experience that is supposed to test it. If I have understood Dewey correctly, it is essential to his view to deny that there is any *theoretical* problem raised at this point. There is, he would contend, a practical intercourse between theory and experience, and particular practical problems are raised by each situation in which a thought needs to be tested, but he would not allow that there is any general theoretical problem of specifying a unique relation between thought at large and experience at large. This denial is of the essence of his rejection of the epistemological problem. Such a pluralistic approach has the initial merit of making it possible to show the critical relevance of experience to judgments in ethics, theology, metaphysics, in short to judgments other than those occurring in the physical sciences, but it also carries with it the disadvantage that it abandons all attempt at explaining how actual knowledge is possible. This is a decided weakness in the position because it means that this view cannot confront any other view which does allow the theoretical problem to arise except by saying that it is a false problem. What this means in effect is that all attempts at making knowledge itself intelligible are greeted by pointing out that science is a fact and that is the end of the matter. The classical type of empiricism on the other hand labored under no such handicap; it harbored very definite views concerning the relation between thought and experience at large and, if these views are to be estimated critically, something more than a denial of the problem is required.

It is now time to indicate the current relevance of this entire discussion. What has here been called the classical conception of experience is the one that has survived, with some modifications of course, in modern logical empiricism. I think it will be generally allowed that the conception of experience in the positivist movement has been almost exclusively that of Hume with two fairly obvious modifications. First, there has been the substitution for the eighteenth century conception of reason ("relations of ideas") of modern relational logic and the apparatus of language systems, and secondly, the constructionist aim of actually building up the world from a set of sensed simples represents a program more ambitious than any envisaged by the classical empiricists. The irony in the development of modern thought is to be found not least in the fact that, just when

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the pragmatic and other movements were beginning to make progress in the development of a broader and more adequate theory of experience over against the classical conception, that conception was revived and re-enforced with the most powerful tools wielded by the logical positivists. Moreover a reply was not easily forthcoming from the reconstructive view just because of its tendency of deny the validity of the theoretical problem involved.

Further discussion of the view upheld by classical empiricism and its recent affiliate concerning how experience confronts thought when exercising its critical function will lead us to the introduction of the "two dogmas of empiricism."

II

Classical empiricism believed, and logical empiricism began by believing, that experience must first be conceived as totally separated from thought before it could function as a critical standard by reference to which the claims of thought might be assessed. If experience, so the argument runs, is in any way antecedently formed or determined by ideas, how shall it be possible to employ it as the test of these ideas? And the conclusion was that experience must be distinct from thought in kind. In view of this radical separation and distinction it has become customary, as Quine points out in the discussion of his first dogma, to formulate the relationship logically as a sharp cleavage between two kinds of statement, analytic and synthetic, the former representing the rational or linguistic component and the latter the pole of experience.³ Having described the situation in this way, the problem then is to say how the one side can know the other or, conversely, how experience as bare sense confronts the rational pole as a test of its claim to knowledge. The most obvious solution that occurred is that the two must correspond in a one to one fashion, and this was the position of classical empiricism as well as the earliest solution offered by logical empiricism. It is in fact of the essence of Quine's second dogma, the program of reductionism or the contention

³When the analytic-synthetic distinction is taken, as it is in all recent discussion, as that between a formal component on one side and the domain of experience on the other, I am inclined to agree with Quine's conclusion that the distinction cannot be successfully drawn and defended. I would not however agree that this holds true for Kant's distinction in this regard because that distinction was quite different from what it has been supposed to be. The concept of what is both synthetic and *a priori* was designed by him as one way of overcoming the impossible cleavage between thought and the domain of presented things. If however, as is the fashion at present, the *a priori* is identified with the analytic, the whole situation is confused. Quine is not free of this confusion since he also thinks that Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic, though on his view metaphorically represented (*From a Logical Point of View*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953, pp. 20-1), is just another way of stating the cleavage between truths of reason and truths of fact. This is false, for were it true, Kant would have had to speak not of the *a priori* synthetic, but of the analytic synthetic which is nonsense.

that every idea can be made to correlate uniquely with some immediate sense experience. Quine has pointed out that there has been a steady progression in the unit of thought chosen for the correlation situation: the classical empiricists chose the *idea* or singular term as their unit; more recent empiricism has chosen the *statement* or well formed compound expression containing a clear assertion, and Quine, attracted by the cogency of Duhem's argument, proposes the *system* of thought or conceptions as the unit to be confronted by experience. Now it might be supposed that this shift in the unit chosen from the side of thought leaves the general relation between thought and experience unaffected, and I submit that this is false.

The fact is that as soon as the term unit is abandoned, while experience is still conceived as exclusively the domain of sense, it becomes necessary to abandon as well the thesis of the one to one correlation if this means imaging, picturing, or mapping. It is not difficult to understand how the classical empiricists could believe that for every term in thought there could be found a sense impression or experience of which the term was a picture or re-presentation, but it is more difficult if not impossible to understand how this same relationship can be maintained when the unit chosen is not a term or simple idea. Moreover the entire notion that statements or judgments picture facts, as Wittgenstein was fond of asserting, is dubious in the extreme, and his picturing relation becomes even more problematic when the unit chosen is a system of conceptions. It may of course be replied that the one to one correspondence relation does not necessarily mean picturing and that the correspondence can be described in some other way. But notice, as the internal development of logical empiricism makes plain, as soon as the picturing correlation one to one of thought units with singular sense experience is abandoned, the *direct* confrontation of bare experience by thought is also abandoned. One is forced to speak instead of "indirect" verification and of the "connection" of the unit of thought with experience by a "circuitous" route. The meaning of the detour involved can be grasped from the following excerpt from Hempel's theory of concept formation in the sciences. He writes,

A scientific theory might therefore be likened to a complex spatial network: Its terms are represented by the knots, while the threads connecting the latter correspond, in part, to the definitions and, in part, to the fundamental and derivative hypotheses included in the theory. The whole system floats, as it were, above the plain of observation and is anchored to it by rules of interpretation. These might be viewed as strings which are not part of the network but *link certain points of the latter with specific points in the plane of observation*. By virtue of these interpretive connections, the network can function as a scientific theory: From certain observational data, we may ascend, via an interpretive string, to some point in the theoretical network, thence proceed, via

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definitions and hypotheses, to other points, from which another interpretive string permits a descent to the plane of observation.⁴

The aim of course of introducing this illustration is not to consider the account of scientific theory it contains, but to call attention to the indirectness of the relation between concept and theory on the one side and experience on the other. One should be able to see clearly enough from this beautifully expressed myth that experience in the form of observation is very far from standing in any one to one picturing correlation with the elements of thought. It is not clear from this alone that Hempel is making as radical a proposal as that involved in saying that it is the system of knowledge as a whole which is confronted by experience, but he does refer to theories, and I should suppose that any theory would represent something more complex than is represented by a single statement.⁵

Now it might be argued that the shift in the unit of thought does not materially affect the manner in which experience confronts thought. That is, it might be contended that in Hempel's account there are still *some* statements directly confronted by observation and that in Quine's analysis some statements, as he puts it, have "a sharper empirical reference" or are closer to the edge of the system than others (pp. 44-5). This would mean that although the day of judgment may never come for some statements in the form of direct confrontation with bare experience or sense, it most certainly does come for others in just this form. And if this is so it can only mean, confining attention for the moment to Quine's view, that if experience confronts the system of knowledge as a whole, it does not confront all parts of that whole in the same sense and in the same relation. Some parts of the system, namely the edges, reintroduce the old empiricist confrontation relationship. The fact that there is confrontation with bare experience at even one point suggests that we are back once again to classical empiricism. The entire question of the sensible and rational components in knowledge must be reconsidered; some theory of their relation and connection must be found that will enable us to pass beyond the sort of dilemma which the analytic-synthetic dispute calls to our attention.

The development of modern empiricism has shown that in every concrete analysis of actual knowledge and of the knowledge situation it becomes necessary at some point to acknowledge a distinction between a perceptual and a conceptual

⁴Hempel, *Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science*, International Encyclopedia of Unified Science, Vol. II, No. 7. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952, p. 36 (*italics mine*).

⁵We may note in passing that the interpolation of concepts and definitions between a thought unit to be tested and direct observation such as implied in Hempel's account represents a considerable relaxation in the empiricist program. It in fact reduces to the contention that units of thought must be *connectible* with experience at some point or points but it leaves considerable latitude for the connection to be made. This is a far cry from old fashioned empiricism and could not possibly be used to eliminate objectionable metaphysics, theology, etc., in accord with the original positivist program.

pole. That is to say, without the encounter of a reality beyond the thinking activity and without categorial forms of thought by means of which to grasp, explain, and interpret the encounter, there can be no knowledge of reality at all. As Kant expressed the point so well, thought without intuitions (sense perceptions) is empty and intuitions without concepts are blind. If however a distinction between the two poles is required, the problem at once presenting itself is, exactly how shall that distinction be drawn and in what manner must the two poles be related in order to cooperate in the production of actual knowledge of the world and of man? Kant saw the problem clearly and his own sharp distinction in kind between the spheres of sense (passivity) and understanding (spontaneity) must be understood against the background of his predecessors Hume and Leibniz. Each in his own way aimed at the denial of one of the poles or, more precisely, at the reduction of one to the other. Hume tried to get on with a continuum of perception or sense, taking an idea as a decaying or less vivid sense impression, while Leibniz working from the other direction tried to establish a continuum of conception or thought, making sense perception into confused conceptions. In both cases one pole was interpreted as an inferior form of the other, and in both cases there was a denial of autonomy and distinctness of kind between the poles. It was against this sort of approach that Kant protested and was led to stress the independence and heterogeneity of sense and understanding. He could see no way of deriving one pole from the other, and consequently he allowed their distinction in kind upon the ground that each has its own contribution to make and neither can make it for the other. In this regard, Kant sided with classical type empiricism.

Having made the distinction in kind however, Kant was faced at once with a new problem; if actual knowledge is impossible without the contribution of both elements together, how in fact are they related and how do they co-operate to produce the reality of knowledge itself? In struggling with this problem, Kant was led to propose what must now be considered as one of the perennial possibilities of solution, namely the idea of a schematism or "third thing" mediating between the two poles. It is, of course, well known that the entire idea of schematic mediation is necessitated precisely because we have begun with a distinction *in kind* between the sensible and rational elements. It is characteristic of this approach to permit analysis to run its course in order to achieve the greatest possible clarity and to avoid placing together under a common head what reveals itself as clearly distinct. Consequently the approach begins with as sharp a distinction between the two poles as possible — even to the point of allowing the two elements to fall apart in a seemingly irreconcilable antithesis — and then proceeds to relate by means of a third or mediating element. It is the function of this element (in Kant's analysis, the schematism of time) to relate categorial forms of thought to the domain of sensible appearance with the ultimate purpose of showing exactly how the co-operation of the two elements leads to knowledge and

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(what is for Kant the same thing) the possibility of experience. The structure of this solution requires that we first distinguish the poles in knowledge in such a way that they appear as different in kind and then unite by means of a third element sharing the natures of each pole without itself being derivable from either alone.

This Kantian type solution must be taken as one perennial alternative particularly in virtue of the fact that its attempt at unification or synthesis comes only after analysis has been allowed to run its course and the diversity of the distinct has been fully acknowledged; it will not attempt unification until the utterly distinct nature of the elements to be brought together has been established. Over against this solution however stands another which may be said to have emerged from it at the same time that it is fundamentally different. The second possibility stems from Hegel and derivative positions and, like the Kantian approach, it too begins with a distinction between a perceptual (immediacy) and a conceptual (mediation) pole in all experience and knowledge. It does not however, and *this is the crucial difference*, allow its initial distinction to emerge as an absolute difference in kind. On the contrary, this way of approach denies that the wholes which actual experience and knowledge are can ever be analyzed into components whose natures are completely detachable from the wholes in which they exist. Thus, although there is acknowledgment of the contributions of sense and thought,⁴ it is denied that the two stand in the relation of *wholly other than* to each other. Instead they appear as distinguishable components within a larger whole which is essentially organic in character and, since there is no absolute difference in kind between the elements to be related, there is no need of the schematizing type mediation. Their relation is achieved in a *process* that is essentially infinite in character. The domain of sense or immediacy must develop in a process whereby conceptual mediation has the task of making explicit for thought the rational or knowable structure implicit in the starting point. On this view there is no domain of sense different in kind from and detachable from thought and, conversely, there is no thought which can be found independently of subject matter coming from beyond it. This approach also begins by distinguishing, but it refuses to allow the process of analysis to dissolve the organic togetherness of the constituents distinguished, which is the same as saying that for it the components do not appear as wholly other than each other but only as moments in an inclusive whole. The result of denying the difference in kind between sense and thought is that the schematizing mediator of the Kantian approach is no longer necessary. In place of the third thing relating the heterogeneous elements, there is the immanent

⁴Since it would not normally be thought that Hegel or any of his followers had neglected the conceptual pole in experience, it may be well to call attention to the fact that Hegel had a genuine sense for the importance of the perceptual pole as well; his defence of empiricism in the *Logic* of the *Encyclopedia* proves the point, see Section 37 ff.

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process of mediation (cf. Hegel's idea that "mediation is immediacy becoming") aimed at showing the concrete togetherness of the two poles in an all inclusive experience.

No doubt those who have traced the development of modern empiricism to the point where the analytic-synthetic dilemma seems insoluble, will not readily see the relevance of the foregoing way of expressing the possible solutions. It is nevertheless the case that the impasse has resulted from the radical separation of the domain of fact (frequently denoted by the terms "experience" or "sense perception") and the domain of thought (whether taken as formal logic or formalized language is not important for the purposes of the present discussion). Moreover along with this radical separation has gone *a persistent rejection of any attempt at mediation*, whether of the Kantian or Hegelian type. The entire situation needs to be reconsidered; the emergence of a problem like the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions is but a sign of a far deeper question, the problem of the relation of thought to reality, of perception to conception. It must therefore be a matter of further inquiry to consider the respective merits of the two perennial type solutions briefly outlined here and to show how one or the other may lead out of the impasse of empiricism, at the same time preserving the appeal to experience as intrinsically intelligible.

What sense is there to speak of God ?

RUDOLF BULTMANN

I

If by speaking "of God" one understands to talk "*about God*," then such style of speaking has no sense at all; for in the moment when it happens the subject (*Gegenstand*), God, has been lost. For when the thought "God" is thought at all, the implication is that God is the Almighty, i.e., the reality controlling everything. But this thought is not thought at all when I *talk about God* — that is, when I regard God as an object of thought toward which I can take a position; when I adopt a point of view from which I stand indifferent to the problem of God; when I suggest propositions concerning God's way and reality which I can reject or, if they are illuminating, accept. Anyone who is moved by proofs to have faith in God's *reality* can be certain that he has comprehended nothing of the reality *of God*; and whoever thinks to proclaim something of God's reality by means of evidences of God is debating about a mirage. For every "*talking about*" presupposes a standpoint apart from that which is being talked *about*. But there can be no standpoint apart from God, and for that reason God does not permit himself to be spoken of in general propositions, universal truths which are true without reference to the concrete existential situation of the one who is talking.

It makes just as little sense to talk about God as it does to talk about *love*. In fact it is impossible to talk *about* love unless the talking about love be itself an act of love. All other talking about love is no speech of love, for it takes a position outside love. In short a psychology of love would be something quite different from speaking about love. Love is no given situation (*Gegebenheit*) for the sake of which (*woraufhin*) something done or something spoken, something not done or not spoken, is possible. It comes into being only as a condition of life itself; it only *is* in that I love or am loved, not as something secondary or

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derivative (*daneben oder dahinter*). The same is true of the relationship of fatherhood and childhood. Viewed as a natural circumstance — so that one can talk about it — it does not reveal its unique nature at all, but is simply a single incident in a certain natural event which takes place between individuals of a species. Where the relationship really comes into being it cannot be seen from the outside, i.e., it isn't something *for the sake of which* for example a son accepts or even allows this or that, feels himself obligated to this or that. The moment the reflection "for the sake of which" enters the relationship, it is ruined. It only *is* at the point where the father actually lives as father, the son as son.

If this be true, then the possible *atheism* of a science could not assert itself for example in denying the reality of God: it would be just as atheistic if it asserted itself to be a science. For to speak in scientific propositions, i.e., in universal truths, about God means nothing else than to speak in propositions which have their precise meaning in that they are generally applicable, that they are detached from the concrete situation of the speaker. But exactly because the speaker does that, he puts himself outside the actual reality of his existence, therefore apart from God; and he speaks of something quite different from God.

To talk about God in this sense is however not only error and foolishness: it is *sin*. In his *Commentary on Genesis* Luther made the point very clearly that Adam's sin was not the deed itself with which he, eating of the forbidden fruit, broke the commandment. Rather it was that he entertained the question: Should God have spoken? — the "*disputare de deo*" that sets itself apart from God and makes of God's claim on men a disputable issue. For if we want to avoid this conclusion and say, this dispute isn't necessarily so badly purposed after all; on the contrary it can be well meant; indeed it can arise from the quest for the true (*Wahrhaftigkeit*), the longing for God — then we show again that we have not comprehended the thought of God. This would be to fall into the old error and put forward the omnipotence of God and our being conditioned by it as a fact which is comprehended as a universal truth, something like the fact that every earthly object is determined by the law of causation. But it is precisely this that would not encompass what the determining of our existence by God means: for it means at the same time the *claim* of God upon us. Thus every standing apart from God is a denial of the claim of God upon us, that is, godlessness, sin. It could be otherwise only if a position of neutrality in relation to God were possible. But in this the thought of God would be sacrificed. Adam thought he could flee from God; but God's claims are not met by flight. Thus talking about God becomes sin.

And the fact remains: it is *sin* even when it comes from an honest search for God. And from this it is only too clear that when we are in such a situation in which we honestly must debate about God, then we are sinners and cannot do anything to get out of sin through our own power. For it wouldn't do us any good at all if, because of a right understanding of the thought of God, we should cease

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to argue about God (*disputare de deo*). For to speak otherwise of God, namely *in* God, is something we obviously cannot presume for ourselves. For as *our* effort it would again be sin, precisely because it would be *our* effort in which the thought of God's almighty sway would be sacrificed. To speak of God as being *in* God is obviously something which can only be given by God.

II

It is therefore evident that if one wishes to speak of God he must certainly *speak of himself*. But how? For if I speak of myself am I not speaking of a human being? And is there not likewise in the thought of God most assuredly the thought that *God is the "wholly other,"* over and beyond the human (*Aufhebung des Menschen*)? Then do we not stand between two negative commandments, as a result of which only the condition of resignation, of silence is possible? On the one hand there is the definite insight: that every speech in which we stand apart from our own specific existence is no speaking of God; that it can only be a statement about our own existence? On the other hand the equally definite insight: all speaking of ourselves can never be a speaking of God because the speaking is only of men?

For in fact every confession of faith, every speaking of experience and inner life, would be to speak of the human. And however enthusiastic the confessions of another might be, these would not help me with my doubt unless I wish to deceive myself. Yes, even my own experiences, if I would comfort myself with them or depend upon them in the situation of doubt, would slip through my fingers. For who assures me that each personal experience was not an illusion? that I should not move beyond it? that I do not now see reality more clearly?

Or must we claim that we speak indeed *in* God when we bear witness, when our inner life speaks, when our experience expresses itself? Without doubt that can be the case. But in *that* very moment when we set up our confession of faith, our inner life, our experiences, as that which brings us to trust God; or which we recommend to others as that whereby they shall be certain of God — in *that* very moment we are *talking about* our existence and have by that fact separated ourselves from it. And that is also the case when we consciously seek after experiences for ourselves: we are then concerned about ourselves rather than questing for God. When I seek after myself — looking backwards or forwards — then I have at the same time split my ego; and the ego which seeks after itself is my existential ego; the other ego after which I seek, which I assume as a fact, is a mirage without existential reality. And the existential ego which is concerned about itself, which quests, shows itself in this very questioning, in this self-concern to be godless. If we wish to speak of God, we obviously cannot begin as though we would speak of our experiences and our inner life, which as soon as we

objectify them, have lost their existential character. And over against this human being, seen as a condition, stands the word that *God is the wholly other*.

But this word has its meaning only in its strong dependence upon the first word — that God is the reality which determines our existence. Cut loose from that, the phrase can only mean that God is *something* quite different from man, a metaphysical being, some kind of an ethereal world, some combination of secret powers, a creative original force (whereby the possible claim that this is meant only figuratively contradicts itself, because in this context God is in fact thought about quite naturalistically), or finally the *irrational*. A piety which wished to base itself on this idea of God would be flight from God, because in it man wishes in fact to escape from the reality in which he stands; he wishes indeed to run away from his concrete existence in which alone he can comprehend the reality of God. In this modern piety it becomes very clear how right Luther was in saying that the natural man flees from God and hates God. He seeks indeed, in wishing to escape from the reality of his concrete existence, to escape that in which alone he can find God. It is of course very understandable that the Pseudo-God of the creative or the irrational can bewitch the human yearning for God; for it promises man that he can get away from himself. But this promise is a misconception and a deception; for because a man wishes *thus* to get away from himself, he runs away from God — provided that God is the power shaping his concrete existence — and runs into his own arms, provided the thoughts of a creative original force and of the irrational are human abstractions and the experiences — in which a man puts his trust in such circumstances — are all too human events. The thought of the “wholly other” cannot be pursued in this way at all. Moreover of course that man does not in truth escape God at all; but while his attitude toward God is that of aversion, his existence is — insofar as it is determined by God — that of the sinner.

The thought of *God as the wholly other* cannot mean therefore, if the talk is to be of God the Almighty, that God were something apart from me which I must first seek, and that I must first flee from myself in order to find. That God, who determines my existence, at the same time is the wholly other, can only mean that he confronts me, the sinner, as *the* wholly other; that, insofar as I am *world*, he confronts me as *the* wholly other. To speak of God as the wholly other only makes sense when I have seen that the actual situation of man is that of the sinner — who wants to speak of God and cannot; who wants to speak of his existence and cannot do that either. He would have to speak of his existence as one determined by God and he can only speak of it as such as a sinner: i.e., as of being in an existence in which *he* cannot see God, in which God is confronted as the wholly other.

III

The circumstances of our existence are indeed as startling in their own way as the Divine; we cannot really talk about either and we have control of neither. What does that mean?

The *reality* about which we usually speak is the world-image which has dominated our thinking since the Renaissance and Enlightenment — under the influence of the world-view of Greek science. We accept something as real when we can comprehend it in the total unity of this world, whether this relationship is conceived in terms of causal or teleological destiny, whether its elements and powers are conceived as material or spiritual; for the contrast of materialistic and idealistic ideology is, in terms of the issue here at stake, irrelevant.

For this view of the world is conceived without consideration of our own existence; we ourselves are treated rather as an object among other objects and placed in the context of this world-view which is posited quite apart from the question of our own existence. It is customary to call the perfection of such a world-view through the inclusion of the human element, an ideology (*Weltanschauung*), and we are usually longing for it, and if we assume that we have it, we propagate it. That such ideologies are very popular, even if they do not speak of mankind in flattering terms — perhaps as the accidental result of a combination of atoms, as the highest of the vertebrates and cousin of the apes, or as an interesting example of psychic complexes — is easily understood. For they perform for man again the great service that they release him from himself, that they lift from him the problem-complex of his concrete existence, the anxiety about it and the responsibility for it. That is indeed the foundation of the longing of man for such a so-called ideology, that in the face of the enigma of fate and death he can withdraw to it, that precisely in the moment when his existence is shaken and problematical he declines to take this moment seriously, in order to understand it rather as one case among others, to organize it in a relationship, to objectify it — and so to free himself from his own existence. And precisely this is the arch-deception (πρωτον ψευδος), and it leads necessarily to the erroneous comprehension of our existence, in that we see ourselves from the outside as the object of self-orienting thinking. And that is not improved when, in contrast with the other objects with which we see ourselves in relationship, we put ourselves forward as protagonists. For man seen by himself as a protagonist is still viewed from the outside. In the question of our existence therefore the distinction between subject and object has to be dropped completely. And the case is not improved at all by having a theistic or a Christian ideology, based on the view that our existence is grounded in God — as though an ideology which includes this proposition satisfies the demands and comprehends our existence. For in this too God is viewed as an outside object just as man. Whoever has a

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modern world-view which is constituted by the concept of law has a godless world-view — even when he thinks of universal laws as a result of the powers and forms of divine action or when he looks at God as the source of this law. For the acts of God cannot be viewed as general events, at which we could look, as in the contemplation of laws, disregarding our own existence, and which we could later incorporate into our own existence — in order to make it intelligible. For thereby we would sacrifice the primary thought of God as the reality which determines our existence. And we concede this unwillingly or unknowingly, in distinguishing ourselves in our individual being quite clearly from the universal laws. For nobody will conceive the life relationships of love, thankfulness, and reverence in which he is tied to others as law; in any event not when he actually lives in these relationships. It is clearly impossible therefore to conceive God as the foundation (*Prinzip*) of the world by which the world and thereby our own existence becomes intelligible. For in this God would be viewed from the outside, and the proposition of his existence would be a universal truth, a truth which would more or less have its proper place in a system of knowledge (of universal truths), in short in a system which sustains itself and our existence too, instead of being an expression of our existence itself. God would then be a given factor, to which a relationship of perception would be possible, a relationship which could be realized according to wish. God, that is, his existence, would then be a Thing, *toward which (wor-aufhin)* an attitude — this or that — would be possible for us. And just this is again the arch-deception (*πρωτον ψευδος*): if the thought of God is taken seriously, then God is nothing *toward which* something or other can be undertaken. He would then be seen from the outside, and just so we would have seen ourselves from the outside. For example we cannot say: because God rules reality he is also my master. Only when man knows himself to be addressed (*angesprochen*) by God in his own life does it make sense to speak of God as the lord of reality. For every talking about reality which ignores the sole moment in which we can have reality, that is, the moment of our own existence, is self deception. God is never something seen from the outside, something over which we have disposition, something "toward which . . ." or "for the sake of which. . ."

If it be true that the world seen from the outside is godless and that we, in so far as we see ourselves as a part of the world, are godless, then it is again clear that God is not the wholly other in that he is somewhere outside the world but in that this world, being godless, is also sinful. This world seen from the outside, in which we move about as protagonists, is exactly our world — which we take seriously and thereby denote as sinful.

There are in fact only two things clear to us about our existence: (1) that we have the care and responsibility for it; for it signifies indeed, "necessity compels thee" (*tua res agitur*); (2) that it is absolutely uncertain and we can not make it secure; for to do so we should have to stand outside it and be God himself. We can not talk about our existence because we can not talk about God;

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and we can not talk about God because we can not talk about our existence. We could only do one if we could do the other. If we could talk of God *in* God, then we could also talk of our existence, and vice versa. In any case a talking about God, if it were possible, would have to be at the same time a talking about us. Thus it remains true: if it be asked how it is possible to speak of God, then it must be answered, only by speaking of us.

IV

But doesn't perhaps something quite different follow from the situation described, that as we are sinners, we shouldn't speak at all? That would naturally mean at the same time that we should not act at all! Does not the point of view that God is the wholly other to men, that he is over and beyond the human, lead to *Quietism*? Whoever thought thus would be making the old mistake. He would, that is, be seeing the thought of God as something *toward which* a certain relationship would be possible or proper; the mistake that the thought of God could be calculated at all as a thing given for our relationship over which we have control. If the thoughts of God as the Almighty and the Wholly Other are taken seriously in their close dependence upon each other, then they clearly mean that we are not given authority for such a self-determining question and self-decision based upon reflection, whether we speak or are quiet, act or relax; that the decision in the matter is God's and that for us there is only a *necessity* (*Müssen*) of speaking or silence, a necessity of acting or not acting. And in fact this is the only answer to the question if and when we can speak of God: when we *must*.

It has meaning for us however to reflect on what this *necessity* actually means. For according to our traditional way of thinking we immediately see this "necessity" as something from the outside again; that is, we see ourselves, the compelled (*Müssenden*), as object which stands under the causal compulsion of a subject; and in this case we see God, the commander, as the subject. That means: we see this situation of man as conditioned by God — which is implied in the "necessity" mentioned as a natural process — from the outside. But here only a necessity can be intended which is a *free act*; for such only derives from our existential being, *in* such alone *are* we ourselves and are we whole. Such act is obedience; for obedience means: to respond to necessity by a free act. It signifies no work which we had to decide on because of the will of God; for then God would be seen from the outside, and in work which we accomplish and present to God we are not ourselves; rather we stand outside it. Such an act means utter dependence, not as pious feeling but rather precisely as a free act, for only in the act are we ourselves. This necessity signifies therefore obedience.

This means that one can never turn to generalities when this necessity is put to us. One cannot know about this necessity in advance, for then a position

outside of the necessity would be required, a position that is outside of our being as those who must, and one would not understand at all the meaning of this existential necessity. The action cannot be taken as something freely intended because a necessity lies at hand but only as something free and *at the same time* as that made necessary. It hardly needs mentioning that this does not mean that the act breaks forth from a necessity of enthusiasm or passion, out of a secret depth of our inner being. For that would be to talk of natural necessity. The much or little of enthusiasm is as unimportant as the much or little of resistance or self-conquest or that the deed can seem to the human eye as a greater or smaller sacrifice. It is not a question of a psychological necessity. The "thou shalt" is spoken by God and is entirely outside our control. Ours is the free act alone. We can only say hypothetically that we have the possibility to speak and act in God *if* it is given us as necessity. But whether such a necessity will become reality for us, we cannot know in advance. We can only make clear to ourselves what this necessity means, namely that it can signify a free act on our part only because otherwise it would not include our existential being. On the question whether this necessity is reality, we can only *have faith*.

V

Now just this and nothing else is the meaning of *faith*. But of course this is not the total of all that it means. For when we said ours was only the free act, then this proposition too, or rather the conviction that something determined is our free act, is only faith. For free act, being the expression of our existence, precisely because only in it and nowhere else do we exist, cannot be known in the sense of something objectively established. It cannot be put forward as an hypothesis supported by evidence. For thereby we would objectify it and put ourselves outside it. Rather it can only be done (and so far as we *speak* of this action its possibility can only be held) by faith.

At last we see ourselves led to the point that even our own existence — for it is based indeed in our act — can never be known by us. Is it illusion? Unreality? Certainly it is nothing of which we know, about which we can talk, and yet it is that alone — when it is real in our speaking and acting — which can give reality to speaking and acting. *We* can only have it by faith. And does this faith lie in our hand, so that we can decide for it? Obviously this faith must also be free act, the original act (*Urtat*), in which we become certain of our existence — and yet it should definitely not be an arbitrary assumption, which we make, but obedience, necessity, precisely *faith*.

The question how such a faith is arrived at is insoluble when it is intended as a search for the process which runs its course when we see ourselves from the outside; it makes no difference whether we define the process rationalistically or psychologically, dogmatically or pietistically. The quest only has meaning — and

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in this sense it is in fact unavoidable — when it asks about the meaning of faith, This faith can only be the affirmation of God's acting upon us, the answer to his word directed to us. For if faith refers to the comprehension of our existence and if our existence is grounded in God — that is, not comprehensible apart from God — then to comprehend our existence is to comprehend God. But if God is not a general law, a foundation, a given factor, then we can comprehend him only in that which he speaks to us, in that he acts upon us. We can only speak of him in so far as we speak of his word directed to us, his acting upon us.

"Of God we can only tell what he does to us."¹

The meaning of this word of God, this acting of God upon us, would obviously be this, that God, in giving us our existence, changes us from sinners to righteous men, in that he forgives the sins, justifies us. This would not mean that he forgives us this or that, light or serious mistake (*Missgriff*); rather he gives us the freedom to speak and to act in God. For only in acting as the free expression of a person — nay, rather in that relationship wherein a person exists at all — can a person enter into a relationship with another person; and everything is spoiled right away of course when the acting is determined from the standpoint of a legal event (*gesetzlichen Geschehens*).

That cannot mean that he inspires us, makes of us ecstasies and doers of wonders, but that he accepts us as justified while we are separated from him and can only talk *about* him, quest for him. It is therefore not as though something extraordinary, recognizable had happened in our life, that extraordinary qualities were channeled into us and we did extraordinary things or spoke extraordinary words which were not human. Think of all that we could do and say that would *not* be human! But *this* has happened — that all of our doing and speaking has been released by the curse — to separate us from God. It always remains sinful so long as it is something undertaken by us. But precisely as something *sinful* it is justified, that is, it is justified by *grace*. We *know* nothing of God; we *know* nothing of our own reality; we have both only in faith in God's grace.

Does this mean that faith is the Archimedean point by which the world is lifted from the corners and changed from a world of sin to the world of God? Yes, that is the message of the faith. But whoever would ask further about the necessity and about the lawfulness, about the ground of faith — he would receive only one answer, in that he would be referred to the message of faith which comes to him with the claim to be believed. He would receive no answer which would give the validation of faith by some final authority (*Instanz*) or other. If this were not so the word would not be *God's* word; but rather God would be called to account; faith would not be obedience. The word enters our world entirely fortuitously, entirely contingently, entirely as an event. No guarantee is there by means of which faith can be held. No one's summons has a claim (*Platz*) in the faith of

¹W. Hermann, *Die Wirklichkeit Gottes* (1914), p. 42.

others whether it be Paul or Luther. Indeed faith can never be for us a standpoint toward which we take a position but always and ever a new act, new obedience. Always uncertain, as soon as we look about ourselves as men and question; ever uncertain, as soon as we reflect on it, as soon as we talk about it; only certain as deed. Only certain as faith in the grace of God unto the forgiveness of sins which justifies me — when it pleases him — although I have not the capacity to speak in God but can only talk about God. All of our doing and speaking has meaning only by grace of the forgiveness of sins, and over that we do not dispose; we can only have faith in it.

This address also is a talking about God and as such, if God is, it is sinful; and if God is not, it is senseless. Whether it is meaningful and whether it is justified rests with no one of us.

The Ghost of Logical Positivism

CARL MICHALSON

Contemporary analytic philosophers have defined their task in such a way as to put every intellectual discipline in debt to philosophy. The debt is joyfully acknowledged, for this philosophy does not attempt to bind other disciplines to itself as the one which sees the deepest truth. This philosophy is no over-lord but a handmaiden. It performs a modest service, yet without subjugating itself. Let me state it with perilous simplicity. Every discipline uses a language. Its language is peculiar to its own subject-matter. The task of philosophy in the analytical definition is to patrol the border between the various functioning languages. One ought not say "Obst!" when ordering fruit in France unless the mechanisms of translation are known to be in operation. Analytic philosophy is a philosophy which limits itself to language about the use of language. Its purpose is to help users of language avoid the confusion of crossing language boundaries unawares.

Why are philosophers needed for that? Why not simply *ad hoc* committees from language departments? Philosophers are needed because linguists deal with the syntax of language, but philosophers deal with its logic. Interdisciplinary vigilance committees of language departments could patrol the boundaries between, let us say, history, biology, and sociology and never challenge sentences in which "father of" was used, so long as their syntax was correct. Hence unsuspecting students could hear in one hour that "Washington is *father* of his country," in another that "the fruit fly is *father* of prodigious eye-color mutations," in still another that "the American male is *father* of a social unit now subject to novel forms of deterioration." Unaided by philosophy, grammarians would have no way of explaining the giddy sensation of inexactitude which this use of language can produce on campus. For languages can have radically different *logical* characteristics notwithstanding their impeccable *syntactical* symmetry. What if one were not alert to these logical discrepancies hiding behind smooth syntax? He would contribute to a chaos comparable to playing basketball by the rules of football. Analytical philosophy emerges as referee of the various university language games. The price it pays for this modest role is to play no game itself. In this definition philosophy is not a varsity language. It is a meta-language, a language about language, a spectator language.

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The therapy which philosophical analysis effects in the realm of meaning is nevertheless impressive. Picture a Kafka-like situation in which a judgmental voice comes from nowhere with the indictment, "That was an illegal pass!" What a miasma of metaphysical and moral mordancy can overcome you if you cannot identify the logic of the language. Is it athletics, is it traffic, or is it social life! When the philosophical analyst asks the question, "How are these terms functioning here?," he has not simply resuscitated the grammarian. He has introduced an aseptic element into modern speech. What is involved is not mere stylistic finesse but the prevention of systematic — that is, logical — ambiguity which results from what Gilbert Ryle calls "category-mixing" or shifting terminological meanings in the middle of conversational streams.

Consider some instances. In using the word "time" it is important to throw up a red flag at the moment its meaning shifts from designation of "a space" to designation of "a flow." When one refers to "action" it is important to know if the reference ever slips from the "causal" to the "motivational" gear. "History" is a term frequently used to specify more than one class of events, so that to say "This is all that happened during that time" can be highly misleading. Even the simplest combinations of words require vigilance, such as "This is his." Is it a descriptive statement, merely naming a thing? Is it an ascriptive statement, designating what belongs to whom? Or is it a "performatory" statement (J. L. Austin) actually effecting a transaction? Take the innocent little word, "same." Does it operate unambiguously under all circumstances? Does "same" in "the same situation" have the connotation it does in "the same man?" (Stuart Hampshire) "Laughing" and "sneezing" are both participles. Does it make any difference in their logical form that one is less voluntary than the other? Do the "data" of the oculist have the same logical form as the "data" of the surgeon, if the oculist *knows* what the letters are but the surgeon *does not know* how the pain feels? (Gilbert Ryle) "Evidence" is a status word in academic vocabularies. Consider a situation then in which a painting is discovered which is purported to be a Goya (A. J. Ayer's illustration). The experts, after making every appeal to the evidence, still disagree. They do not despair however, for they are confident the solution resides in the evidence. Then a philosophical amateur among the experts speaks up. After all, a picture, he says, is "a set of ideas in the perceiver's mind." What happens to the examiners' contented focus on the "evidence?"

Philosophical analysis is having an especially salutary effect upon the discipline of theology. This has only lately occurred in any direct way, thanks to the efficient circulation of the news that contemporary analytic philosophy has relinquished its former verificationist criterion. In the Logical Positivist epoch, language analysis meant testing assertions for their verifiability. The only canon of verifiability was that executed by the physical sciences. Sentences which did not lend themselves to verification were judged to be "nonsense," which really

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only meant that those certain sentences were not "sensibly," that is, perceptually either verifiable or falsifiable. At present language analysis means that there is a great variety of languages in operation and that the task of philosophy is not to judge which languages are meaningful in terms of their verifiability but to adjudicate the lines between the various functioning languages in order to prevent confusion. The most crucial area of confusion of course is still between languages which do lend themselves to verification and languages which do not. Those that do not are not ruled out. They are simply contained. They must make no statement which implies verifiability if in fact the statement deals with what is not verifiable.

This demand for linguistic rigor is not new to theology. The effectiveness of some of the major theologians of the Church has been in direct proportion to their analytical clarity. Probably the most conspicuous instance is Thomas Aquinas. Even John Wesley materializes as a primitive Oxford analyst after one has noticed the recurrent insistence in his sermons on overcoming ambiguity by the scrupulous use of words. Today Rudolf Bultmann's "demythologizing" project is based on the very desire for terminological clarity which comes with freedom from "category-mixing." Myth is a form of assertion which refers to the unverifiable in a language which suggests verifiability. When "son of God" is taken as a genealogical judgment, faith is mythologized. When "end of the age" is taken as a meteorological judgment or "people of God" as a sociological judgment, categories are mixed and mythology has set in. Demythologizing does not call for the abandonment of myth from sacred literature but simply for its translation into the language appropriate to the *logic* of its claims.

The Loss of Dialogue

Notwithstanding these and other grounds for gratitude to philosophical analysis, I as a theologian am sad about the current prominence of this point of view as philosophy. I call attention to my position "as a theologian" in order to warn the general reader not to trust my competence in philosophical matters but also to advise the philosopher that I do not wish to tamper with his affairs. I only say that something is happening in analytical philosophy which is bound to impoverish theology, whatever else it may do to philosophy. The real apprehension of the theologian is not with the direct effect of logical analysis upon the statement of the Christian faith but with its indirect effect. Most of its direct observations refer to popular belief or to what these certain analysts remember of their childhood religious training. Theologians are as critical of immature expressions of faith as these analysts are. What the theologian fears is not what this philosophy is doing directly to the faith but what it is doing to philosophy, and hence indirectly to a faith which relies so heavily upon hearty dialogue with philosophy. The story of theology's life with philosophy records a relation in which philosophy has helped theology formulate its questions and conceptualize its faith. A

maieutic force is always being exerted by philosophy upon the body of Christian faith which helps deliver the faith into intellectual comprehension. If analytical philosophy were to become what it aspires to become, namely philosophy itself, I for one would fly my flag at half-mast. It would be a sign that theology had lost its closest dialogical partner. Then I would be forced to go in search of some other discipline, perhaps history or literature, to do what philosophy traditionally had done but would now no longer be qualified to do. The grounds of this disqualification, as I see it, support Boyce Gibson's complaint that "the fashionable mature accommodation between an empirical philosophy and a declaratory religion . . . is not even a marriage of convenience; it is a frostily amicable bilateral quarantine."

My recurrent reservation upon entering into dialogue with philosophical analysis is the sense of the ghost of logical positivism lingering in its procedures. When "leprechauns-in-watches" become analogues of selves-in-bodies or of God-in-the-world, suspicion is aroused that a value judgment is being smuggled in. When the name "Pickwick" is said to function differently from the name "Napoleon" because the former is fiction and the latter historical fact, one surmises that the constitutive power of Dickens' literary imagination has been culpably down-graded.

Philosophical analysis is an empirical philosophy, but we are repeatedly advised that it is not so in the same sense in which logical positivism was empirical. For logical positivism, empiricism meant the perceptual verifiability of a language. For contemporary analytical philosophy, empiricism means simply the examination of the use of a language. If one did not realize how radically the connotation of the word "empiricism" has changed in the later phases of analytical philosophy, he would be quite puzzled to know what the Oxford analyst, Ian Ramsey, means when he says that without "empirical anchorage all our theological thinking is in vain." By empirical he is referring to the location of theological assertions in the logic of "worship, wonder, and awe." He does not mean that theological statements find some kind of sensory verification in liturgical acts. He simply means that, when the sense of these statements is sought in detachment from their liturgical use, confusion is at hand.

What can be meant however when the analyst deplores the incursion of the language of drama upon philosophy, if not that it inspires the evasion of verification, an "evasion of that abiding and ultimate question — *on what grounds* ought I assume an attitude of obedience before the New Testament and not before, say, the Koran?" (Ronald Hepburn) Why should virgin birth and resurrection be held more "conceivable" than the Trinity just because they are "historical" while the Trinity presumably is not? (J. J. C. Smart) Why is religious language said to have "an insecure status" which makes it "controversial in a way in which scientific language is not?" (Anthony Flew) What makes the "at least this, at least that" of scientific predication more acceptable to analysts than the "not this,

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not that" of mystical *via negativa*? (John Wilson) I judge it is the ghost of logical positivism which, though renounced, still lurks in their analytical machinery.

The ghost of positivism haunts the work of the very most well-intentioned philosophical theologians among the analysts in the guise of what has been called "eschatological verification." (John Hick) According to this view, the falsifiability of certain propositions, especially religious assertions, may be possible only after death or at the end of history. Take the claim that "human personalities survive bodily death" or that "the love of God and human suffering are not incompatible." As long as the obvious facts of life which tend to falsify these statements are liable to revision by information that may still emerge beyond death or at the end of history, these claims enjoy the logical status of assertions. The device is reminiscent of John Wisdom who has said, "to know that something is so, is with a proper basis to believe that it is so and be right." Everything hinges on the leap between "a proper basis" and "be right." Eschatological verification means that the end of the game vindicates as knowledge the move one took in mid-game by faith. Or to say it wryly, as Wisdom does on another occasion, winning a race is one of the most "setttable" disputes in language. Theologians could say of their religious concepts what F. Waisman of Oxford has said of empirical statements in general. There is a "porousness" about them, an "open texture" such that "we can never fill up all the possible gaps through which a doubt may seep in." But they would themselves be tricked into coddling the ghost of logical positivism if they anticipated even a final moment, however remote, when the last gap would be filled. The verification which positivism required has nothing in common with theological reasoning. Scientific facts, which are surely no sufficient cause of religious belief, are no necessary cause either. To say so underestimates the radical effect which passionate personal belief has upon the logic of the reality with which faith is involved.

That suggests another occasion for theological restlessness in the presence of analytical philosophy. Christian faith is primarily an historical reality, but analytical philosophy is notably deficient in historiography. What kind of dialogical partner then is a philosophy which yawns at the very moment in the conversation when theology begins to show an interest?

The Bird in the Hand

Analytical philosophy appears to have a sensitive approach to history. This is evidenced in its refusal to accept the concept, "history," as embracing a simple reality. History exists in "levels," and languages which use the word as if it meant the same thing in every operation contribute to confusion. For instance there are two pasts: the irrecoverable past which no one will ever again know and the past which is knowable as a dimension of one's present. That distinction is fairly patent. But there are also two futures: the future which has not yet occurred and the future which never comes. Historical sceptics have a field day if they can

confine history to the temporal modes of past and future and then purvey the understanding that everything past is simply irrevocable and everything future will simply never come. The analytical approach to historical language is a refreshing exposé of such reductionistic sleight-of-hand.

History can also be classified in respect of its grades of generality. There is what is called "the ideal limit" or the "book of the recording angel" view of history where every slightest detail of history is embraced. I detect that this view of history corresponds to the "God knows" convention, where "God" is the formal equivalent to "an infinite number of infinitely efficient observers and computers." (J. O. Urmson) At the opposite extreme there is the lowest level of historical generality, probably biography, where the historian is limited to anecdotes accidentally available in his sources of information.

One ought not be shocked by now to hear the analyst observe that these two extremes are "equally good history." "We do not get a better or a worse view of a field according as we take a bird's eye, or a man's eye, or a worm's eye view of it, though we get a different view." (A. M. MacIver) Philosophical analysis does not evaluate; it simply classifies according to the logic inherent in the language. Hence to call these levels "equally good history" is really redundant. A man's history is the only history a man has, therefore the terms "better" or "worse" are inapplicable.

Here however the ghost of logical positivism stubbornly persists. The analyst does not see how possible it is for a *man himself* to have more than one kind of history and how one kind may be more suitable to his humanity than another. This distinction may not require the exercise of value judgments, but it does require more finesse than is manifest in most philosophical analysis. (With the possible exception of the recent work by Stuart Hampshire, whose residual positivism is dissolved partially by a trend toward phenomenology.)

Philosophical analysis is deficient in historiography because it does not sufficiently distinguish what phenomenologists call "the natural standpoint" or *prima facie* evidence from the "phenomenologically reduced" standpoint. Efforts of historians imaginatively to reconstruct and participate in the events of the past are dismissed as subjectivistic caprice. Lest one fail to recognize where to draw the line between sensitive personal involvement, which is the stuff of history, and sheer inventiveness, philosophical analysis approves as history a single view not fully human. There is some plausibility in the observation therefore that linguistic analysis flourishes as philosophy chiefly in a land noted for its "national taste for landscape painting."

"The Skylark" is prominent in the analytic landscape. Logical analysts simply do not want historians avowing Shelley's bird that "never wert." The mistake the analyst makes is assuming the reality of only one kind of bird. Of several possible birds, which does the historian deal with? The natural standpoint dictates that the historian deal with the ornithological bird. In fear of snaring

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the bird of aesthetic daydreams instead (i.e., "bird thou never wert"), the analyst seems to choose the ornithological bird. It has been said of the man's, worm's, the bird's eye views of history, "they are all views of the same field." (A. M. MacIver) That is the simplistic mistake of the natural attitude, for there is also the historian's bird.

Now the temptation is to say that, while the ornithologist's bird is not the sufficient cause of the historian's bird, it is the necessary cause. To yield to that temptation is to be seduced by the natural standpoint, which is the ghost of logical positivism. History must not be thought to be a common field of objective events simply subject to a diversity of subjective interpretations. History is a realm of events which are interpretations. Interpretation is the objective reality of these events. Such events will not be historically recovered therefore except by acts of interpretation. To back away from interpretative responsibility in the effort to get to some object itself is to create a new object from which the interpretation is squeezed out and hence an object which is deficient in historical reality. The necessary and sufficient cause of the historian's bird is the historical bird. The ornithologist's bird never makes history, for it is the bird in the bush, the *prima facie* bird. The historian's bird is the bird in the hand, the bird constituted by the fact of its existence in man's world. Philosophical analysis dehumanizes history by an implicit value judgment that a bird in the bush is worth two in the hand.

This leads to my main anxiety over the prestige of language analysis as philosophy today. Clear justice is not done to the effect of the personal dimension upon the logic of reality. The cardinal illustration is John Wisdom's parable of the two travellers who stumble upon a garden. One traveller concludes that a gardener must exist; the other concludes that no gardener exists. The purpose of the parable is to mark the transition in contemporary British philosophy from logical positivism to linguistic analysis. When two travellers can derive opposite results from the same field of evidence, what shall the philosopher conclude? He may now accept both conclusions as equally valid, with no responsibility to verify either. The situation is parallel to two viewers in the presence of a work of art. One says, "It's beautiful!" The other says, "I don't see it!" Both have the same picture before them but draw opposite conclusions. That is taken to mean their tastes are different, and analytical philosophy does not adjudicate tastes. It only helps to indicate which way the languages function. The validity of their conclusions is a matter of indifference.

Clarity without Validity

The repeated assumption of the analyst that the nature of the human question has no bearing upon the kind of reality one encounters is rather too bland. As I have said, it is philosophy's own show if it wishes to delimit its act in this way; but it is a calamity to theology that its dialogical partner has so depersonalized the philosophical medium that cries of wretchedness over the inability of the uni-

verse to answer critical questions about reality are put off with counter-questions about the use of the words which phrase the cry. That the passion is left unsatisfied is not the fault, but that the passion has no chance to enter into the emergence of the appropriate reality.

"Time" is sketched with terminological precision, but no sense is left that time is running out. The "future" is categorized with verbal clarity, but no burden of choice before its imminence remains. The existence of "other minds" dominates the dialogue, but there is no tension of struggle for love and power in the conflict with these other selves. The problem of "pain" for logical analysis is the question of how to overcome solipsism. This philosophy is so enamoured of liberation from the epistemological privacy of the pain experience that it forgets to cry out in anger, "Why the pain!" "God" is a formal concept which stands for omniscience, but there is no sense of the holy such as an ultimate personal presence or even absence would inspire. "Who am I?" is always asked in the sanitary Cartesian sense where the continuity of the self is treated as a technical problem. The astringent query of Pascal, "Am I?," or of the medieval mystics, "Why am I something and not nothing?," drops out of range. Philosophy begins in "doubt," as Descartes knew, and doubts in philosophical analysis are "requests for decision" (John Wisdom), but only the decision concerning the proper form of the language to be used. What of the question of the proper form of human existence to adopt? What of the question of "ultimate meaning?" That is the question which, for some philosophy today and in the past, has made suicide the number one philosophical problem. "Meaning" for analysts however no longer connotes "importance" but "the implications words carry." "Ultimate" refers no longer to "what makes life worth living" but to the circumstance that "a fact has in some sense only one set of terms." (John Wisdom) Why should philosophy as a discipline be permitted to arrive at the place where its metamorphosis from deep human questions to language-and-logic questions is experienced as a chill?

A. J. Ayer recently deplored certain philosophers who "see tragedy in what could not conceivably be otherwise." By that he meant they cannot seem to live with equanimity in the presence of the inability to know anything for certain. Logical analysis quiets all sense of tragedy in philosophy by moving the concern of philosophy beyond what produces tragic awareness. Such philosophical ways of evading what is so integral to being human may become acceptable to philosophy, but they make philosophy unacceptable to enterprises which insist upon transparency to the basic human questions. Christian theologians, in looking for a dialogical partner, do not seek philosophies which are already Christian. They only seek for methods which admit the human questions where they are most profoundly raised. By design, philosophical analysis abrogates this responsibility. Insofar as it does so, it ceases to hold the interest of the theologian.

Books and Ideas

The Realities of the Human Situation

Professor Polanyi conceives of his essay, *Personal Knowledge*, as a step towards a post-critical philosophy. It is actually the formulation of the first principles of an epistemology which stresses the *pistis* component, understanding *pistis* as belief, in all cognition. Thus the grand Augustinian maxim, *credo ut intelligam*, marks the gateway to all truth. At once the execution of this program demands an attack upon widely prevalent views of the relation of subject to object. The intent is to take a fresh grip upon the indiscrptible realities of the organic human situation. Cognition occurs in the rich complexity of man's being; and man's being is to be understood in relation to the whole continuum of nature. In the former case Polanyi tells us how deeply and significantly commitment figures in the whole life of mind; and in the latter how man is product and aim of the whole process of nature which, in view of the richness and the coherence of the world, may reasonably be seen as the handiwork of God or (an equally consistent inference ?) as itself divine.

As he develops this very promising program Polanyi identifies and seeks to demolish certain mischievous interpretations of the ideals of scientific enquiry, notably of course the ideal of objectivity interpreted as requiring "a specifiably functioning mindless knower" (p. 264). Objectivistic scientism, he says,

offers no scope for our most vital beliefs and it forces us to disguise them in farcically inadequate terms. Ideologies framed in these terms have enlisted man's highest aspirations in the service of soul-destroying tyrannies" (p. 265).

And in order to overcome such monumental errors he insists that:

We must now recognize belief once more as the source of all knowledge. Tacit assent and intellectual passions, the sharing of an idiom and of a cultural heritage, affiliation to a like-minded community; such are the impulses which shape our vision of the nature of things on which we rely for our mastery of things. No intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework (p. 266).

Accordingly he explores the fiduciary ground and structure of scientific knowledge; and he has, I think, but little difficulty in disclosing and elucidating the cognitive interests, passions, procedures, and assessments of scientific enquiry.

Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy by Michael Polanyi. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, 428 pages, \$6.75.

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"Science" is a community enterprise and as such rests upon attitudes and commitments which cannot be justified by any scientific procedures, that is, by any *specifically* scientific procedures, since the pragmatic justification for accepting scientific claims as true owes nothing to any scientific procedure or principle and actually succeeds only in tying the scientific community back into the broader human enterprise — if indeed not into the adventure of life in the cosmos.

Before we continue with Polanyi's argument, I want to express mild surprise over the unqualified identification of *belief* as the source of all *knowledge*. It would seem that the insertion of the word *human* before "source," in the passage just cited, is called for, unless he wants to deny that cognition is, or can be known to be, a transaction uniting a human subject and a world beyond that subject. But subjectivism is a view he rejects. The question arises, accordingly whether the healthy-minded man simply *believes* that there is a world beyond himself and his fellows, a world magisterially endowed with power and wit to correct him — a belief engendered by the community which supplies that food to his mind and heart without which neither can function — or to the contrary he *knows* there is such a world and longs to know it better, the better to live in it in the flowering of love.

To put my difficulty at this point in somewhat different terms: I am not sure whether Polanyi means to say that belief is somehow the ground, the pre-condition, of cognition, or that belief contains already all that cognition aspires to. If it is the first, I think we can agree that the ultimate human pre-conditions of any enquiry into the nature of things are dispositional — before knowledge can be wrested from experience the self as knower-to-be must hunger after knowledge; but this hardly means that dispositional factors, and especially those upon which the light of reflection has yet to fall, are determined purely and simply from the depths of subjectivity either biologically or psychologically regarded. Wanting and having are not uniformly related to each other as cause to effect in that order; and on the levels of life least disturbed by the inner operations of mind, organisms are incapable of wanting what they cannot in the nature of the case get, unless they are defrauded by human mismanagement or freak of chance. What they want is good for them and is normally provided, but it is not good because they want it and, alas, their wanting it can become an irrelevancy in the forward sweep of Nature. Even so their "wants" are grounded in the nature of things and carry them from feeling into overt action.

If we advert to the plane of human behavior we may say that the grounding-beliefs of a community express so many prime intuitions of the nature of things; and that from such beliefs the life-blood of all serious enquiry flows in that community. But the inspection of the ground-beliefs are not the business of any particular and positive science, i.e., an inspection calculated to establish or to unseat such beliefs as being true or false.

Presumably an analogical if not identical judgment should be made about any

asseverations of any community about the reality nearest its heart that must be made about scientific claims of truth: these avowals and claims rest upon beliefs which cannot be warranted by citing (to say nothing of proving) any one of those avowals and claims. Suppose for instance that a christian fellowship declares that Jesus Christ will come again visibly into the visible world in order to save the true believers from the wrath about to engulf all creation. This avowal rests upon beliefs credited as true, such as the belief that God is truly described in the Bible; but the avowal certainly cannot be cited as a warrant for believing in such a God in the first place. In fact the hope for the Second Coming is derived from the belief in the truth of Scripture and can be treated as an explication of that prior belief.

What then is the end to be served by disclosing the logically primitive beliefs of a community in their naked state, so to speak? A number of answers swarm into view; and a sampling of these will not, I hope, carry us too far afield. We might say for instance that such a disclosure will serve, as hardly anything else will, to exhibit the real character of a community, it being assumed that its everyday behavior is occasionally (if not habitually) at cross-purposes with its fundamental beliefs. Or again we might say that we need to know what the prime beliefs of a community are before we identify ourselves with it, that is, before we make our own real purposes identical with its real purposes — surely a common and substantial motivation in the critical exploration of the fundamental values of a community. In either case the enquiry into prime beliefs is an interested one; and the interests are governed by pressures, solicitations, and prior commitments. In order to criticize in other words one must have ground upon which to stand, and though one may have chosen this ground, one's choice does not create that ground. Hence the "*pistis*-centric" predicament: I can reject beliefs only when I have already embraced other beliefs to serve as the instruments — and the aims — of destruction.

But this brings us up against a troublesome question: *what is an adequate and just criterion for the evaluation of primitive beliefs, if it is not truth?* But where is a criterion to be found which any more implacably drives us into objective reality? Professor Polanyi grants this; this strikes me as unwarranted generosity on his part towards metaphysical descriptions over against psychological descriptions and logical mapwork; unwarranted because I understand him to be saying that truth-criteria themselves are self-determinations of a community. The community may say that the criteria are the natural products of inescapable transactions with reality disclosing itself decisively to that community, but without either purpose or hope of exposing anything but the real nature of that community to anyone interested in that information.

The central issue at stake here is the account Polanyi offers of the knower's transactions with reality transcending the self and transcending any and all of the visible and finite communities in which selves live. He appears to me to be

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intimidated by the hiddenness of such reality; but since I may well be doing something less than justice to his view I want to fill in certain very important elements to which attention has not yet been given. He proposes for instance to distinguish the *personal* from the subjective element in commitment, as follows:

... commitment is a personal choice, seeking, and eventually accepting, something believed . . . to be impersonally given, while the subjective is altogether in the nature of a condition to which the person is . . . subject (p. 302).

Thus the personal is meant to suggest centred agency, causal efficacy, so to say, flowing upward and outward from an inner source; while the subjective is not so much the private as it is the passive aspect of self-existence, i.e., being (or having the sense of being) an effect of external and independent cause.

At this point Polanyi introduces the notion of universality without which self-existence fails to reach the level of the personal:

The fiduciary passions which induce a confident utterance about the facts are personal, because they submit to the facts as universally valid, but when we reflect on this act non-committally, its passion is reduced to subjectivity (p. 303, italics added).

But he at once relates universally to the human order:

Our personhood is assured by our simultaneous contact with universal aspirations which place us in a transcendent perspective (p. 324).

Thus "universality" pertains to the aspirational order, and "transcendence" to the postulated inclusiveness of our perceptions or, if not our perceptions, then our point of view. Hence to be a person is to achieve mastery over merely idiosyncratic behavior, for the realization of aims essentially human.

Relative to the moral life this is an important claim vigorously registered. What is not clear to me is how the same claim moves us over or around the distinction (mine, not his) between *postulated* universality and *apprehended* universality in the realm of fact — which is after all a realm centrally important for scientific knowledge if not for every other cognitive venture. I grant the importance of calling attention to the fact that scientists, being human, must walk by faith under the starry heavens established by community-wide acceptance; but it does not seem to me to be the case that scientists postulate the universality of fact: they *acknowledge* it as a prime feature of the perceptual rather than the aspirational realm.

So we do not yet know, from Polanyi's account, what investment non-human and supra-human reality makes in human (perhaps all too human) aims. To answer this question he places the human phenomenon in the context of

evolutionary nature, that nature being in his view a process of *anthropogenesis*: the business of nature is the creation of man.

So far as we know, the tiny fragments of the universe embodied in man are the only centres of thought and responsibility in the visible world. If that be so, the appearance of the human mind has been so far the ultimate stage in the awakening of the world: and all that has gone before, the strivings of a myriad centres that have taken the risks of living and believing, seem to have all been pursuing, along rival lines, the aim now achieved by us up to this point. They are all akin to us. . . . We may envisage then a cosmic field which called forth all these centres by offering them a short-lived, limited, hazardous opportunity for making some progress of their own towards an unthinkable consummation. And that is also, I believe, how a Christian is placed when worshipping God (p. 405).

The vision is wonderfully stirring: a cosmic process infinitely complex and thrown out across immensities of time and space far too vast for human mentality to cope with, yet withal so surely guided home to spirit — that being in us which loves both coherence and freedom, order and novelty, security and adventure — that we are constrained to believe that Spirit indwelt the whole past and has the whole future with which to play its sublime games without hindrance proposed by any adversary properly satanic.

Polanyi does not frame the vision as if it were poetry, a "likely story" told after ambitious Reason has exhausted every power of its own. Grant to poetry, if you will, a power to bring truth home with unequalled luminosity and resonance; we must yet insist that science and philosophy have severally their own instruments and their own aims; and that they share an aim: to comprehend reality in explanations and recognitions grounded in fact and everlastingly responsible to fact. True, the explanations are products in some ways of common effort and of community values; but the facts are given not by the community but by the great world beyond; and it is surely the intention of explanation to master so much of that world as fact and inference can manage.

So too we may grant that reality is what we are able to make of it, and knowing is its making — an art, in a sense — and what it is in its own ultimately hidden depths is a "call," a summons to create it, to shape it in the mind's wonderfully ingenious ways. Yet we must insist that at one point or another whoever would truly know what reality is has no choice whatever but simply to stand and allow it to declare itself, and in this self-declaration to take form of itself and not merely sweep over us in unbrookable terrible power. Wisdom consists of learning what reality will stand for from us: and communities of every sort abound in appearance-salvaging and reality-avoiding mechanisms; and we know, and not merely believe, that these mechanisms are, every one, sins against the spirit.

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In richly suggestive ways Professor Polanyi has shown how intimately enmeshed knowledge is with non-cognitive factors in the self. He has called attention to extremely interesting and significant things in the logic and ontology of commitment; and he has driven home the fact that "objectivity" has certain striking cultic — and not merely communal — features. Yet the conviction will not down that cognition, be it ever so personal and otherwise imbued in human beings with human features, is an enterprise implicating reality all the way. Indeed I am astonished that Polanyi does not extend his argument to embrace degrees and kinds of knowledge, for in the rich density of human aspirations and beliefs there is much to prompt and warrant such an extension, and most notably of course the belief that nature and ourselves with it are alike the creations of God, who conceals his purpose from all finite striving after it in order to reveal himself in his own time and perfect freedom in Jesus Christ. But Polanyi has gone no farther than to exploit one metaphysical model: man understood as a structure of appetitional and thus teleological energy. This of course is one "model of the model"; and we are not clear on what governs and warrants its choice. Is this version of the model the best that the *scientific* community can do? Very well; but there are other communities, grounded in other faiths, avowing other dogmas, coping as best they can with what *they* take to be universally valid facts, and claiming (and I confess, making good thereupon) to know more of what spirit truly is (and to know it better) and what it must do in obedience to the revealed God.

I do not quite believe that Professor Polanyi has gotten out of sight of the boundaries of the critical philosophy. For that philosophical view, as for his own, objective reality is hardly more than an ideal luring the mind into its distinctive creations, none of which seizes the real world. What he has done is to expose the aridities of a de-humanized scientific expression of that ideal. He has not advanced very far along the line of indicating what constitutes the basis for distinguishing valid from invalid expressions of that ideal in science, theology, or what-not.

JULIAN N. HARTT

The Forms of Meaningful Statement

This is an excellent book for those who are interested but puzzled by the present ways of the philosophic movement which may be described as semantic analysis, and who want both a clear presentation of its present ways and a historical

Philosophical Analysis Between the Two World Wars by J. O. Urmson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956, 203 pages, \$2.90.

sketch of how it has come to these ways. It is particularly good because it is not just a book about philosophy and philosophers but is itself a philosophic essay. As Mr. Urmson would put it, he is "doing philosophy" as well as describing it.

The historical account begins in the early decades of the present century with Bertrand Russell's reactions against idealism and his first attempts to find new ways of philosophy consonant with the logical studies he was doing with Whitehead, which found expression in *Principia Mathematica*. Russell's first proposal, that of logical atomism, is analyzed and appraised in detail. Briefly put, the idea of logical atomism is that just as one begins logic with simple or atomic propositions, building up complex propositions by a process of logical construction, so similarly there must be atomic facts as basic constituents of the world. The world is thus assumed to be of identical structure with a perfect language; and there was little doubt at this time that *Principia Mathematica* was the logical skeleton of such a language. The analytic method that followed from logical atomism consisted of analyzing ordinary statements and terms into their atomic components. It is to be noted that this analysis was of a frankly and plainly metaphysical sort, bearing close and cordial relations to British empiricism, with its belief that the ultimate constituents of the world are sense data or their referents.

From the first this philosophy faced formidable difficulties. For one thing there was the relation of statement to fact. Wittgenstein said in the *Tractatus*, "We make ourselves pictures of fact." But this idea sounded like a naive correspondence theory of truth which came strangely from a philosopher of Wittgenstein's sophistication. Similarly the idea of fact raised difficulties. Are there molecular and general facts, as well as atomic facts? Russell even found himself defending the idea of negative facts. Difficulties developed in the new system of logic. Alternative logical calculi were developed.

Yet more than because of any of these specific difficulties, the downfall of logical atomism came as a result of the anti-metaphysical direction taken by British philosophy as the result of the Vienna circle and logical positivism. Urmson points out the influence of Wittgenstein's changing views on the Vienna circle during the early 1920's, as well as the influence of the latter on British thought. The logical rigor of analytic philosophy increased apace along with its hostility to metaphysics. Logical positivism may be characterized as a formulation of the positivist position as a set of rules for the use of language so that assertions going beyond rigorously empirical limits were conceived not as false but as meaningless nonsense. Two and only two forms of meaningful statement were assumed — empirical and logical. Whatever kind of utterance was more or other than these was assumed to be nonsense or at best to have merely emotive meaning.

The story of the rise and fall of logical positivism is well and clearly told. Its rigorously critical spirit, its devotion to the verification principle, its view of philosophy's task as the logical analysis of language — all of this is clearly

described. This philosophy sought valiantly but in vain to avoid the problem of language's relation to a referent, with the consequently metaphysical implications of this reference. But in the end the world forced itself to the attention of these positivists; then they ceased to be positivists and became metaphysicians again.

During the same period, namely the late 1930's, the idea of reductive analysis came under increasingly hostile attack. Positivists might set up agendas for reducing all statements to sense data statements, but increasingly men saw how genuinely irreducible are such statements as those about people, nations, and other macroscopic events and objects.

The eclipse of logical positivism coincided with the advent of World War II. As British philosophy emerged from the war, new post-positivist attitudes had already begun to take definite shape. There was a renewed interest in metaphysics — not as pre-critical speculation but as a postcritical way of focussing on certain persistently human problems. Philosophy in other words does not give us new facts, but it does give us new perspectives and new illumination upon the familiar scene of man's life in the cosmos.

Philosophy in the new period resolutely continued the task of semantic analysis but from a new viewpoint which Urmson sums up in two familiar slogans of the new period: (1) "Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use," and (2) "Every statement has its own logic." The assumption lying behind both of these slogans is that language has not just two but a great many uses, and that therefore the proper task of analysis is to specify and describe each use, comparing it with other uses. The emphasis on a functional approach to language is apparent in the first slogan; and a contextual approach to each of the many uses is to be seen in the second.

With the statement and use of these principles we come to the type of philosophy which "is done" at the present time at Oxford and Cambridge and at many other places throughout the British Isles. It offers both similarities and contrasts to the American and Continental European development of philosophic analysis. Taking off from ordinary language, characterized by rigor of analysis, its tone and temper is that of polite British understatement. As has been said, common language is the language of the British university common room.

Certainly one of the criticisms to be made of this philosophic movement and temper is that it is excessively cautious. Hence the range of traditional philosophy is narrowed. We pass over in silence many of the great themes of philosophy for fear of falling into egregious and nonsensical error. So philosophy tends to become trivialized into a polite British gentleman's game.

Yet the hopeful aspect of the situation is the way in which many of the concerns excluded from philosophy in the earlier periods of analytic philosophy are now forcing their way back into the picture. Ethics, esthetics, even metaphysics and theology are beginning to be treated as serious issues. To be sure the

dominant temper is still cautiously critical, but a new beginning of some sort is increasingly apparent.

One emerges from this study of the analytic movement with the conclusion that analysis solves no problems. If the analysis is candid and comprehensive enough we get all the old problems back. But they return with a difference. There is a rigor and precision of statement that the old philosophy lacked.

It is worthwhile for students of religion to acquaint themselves with these new ways of philosophy if only to remain in communication with an interesting and influential group of their contemporaries. I do not think that analytic philosophy holds much promise as an apologetic device, but only if we can handle it will we be able to eliminate some of the more egregious and philistine errors concerning the nature of religion which occur and recur in contemporary philosophy.

Yet when all is said for it, this movement is not "modern philosophy" as Urmson as well as other adherents pretentiously claim. It is one aspect of contemporary British philosophy. Incidentally Urmson has almost nothing to say about G. E. Moore — a surprising omission. Whitehead of course is mentioned only as Russell's collaborator in logic. As metaphysics continues to recapture its lost place in the sun, one wonders when the analysts will rediscover Whitehead and what they will make of him.

JOHN A. HUTCHISON

The Impact of Wittgenstein

Everyone seems agreed that Ludwig Wittgenstein possessed a genius of some sort or other; perplexities begin when we seek to define exactly what sort of genius it was. Estimating Wittgenstein's work is no ordinary task of evaluation because the man himself, all his singular traits and mannerisms, always seems to get in the way. The power of the personality has made it difficult for some to distinguish the man and his approach to philosophy from the doctrines he held. But the running together of the person and the thought is more understandable in the philosophers of existence than it ever can be in the case of an analytic philosopher like Wittgenstein. Indeed it is a curious and even ironical fact that thinkers who separate so sharply the so-called "logical" from the "psychological" should find themselves so frequently appealing to Wittgenstein's character and approach when they are supposed to be commending the precision and cogency of his philosophy.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, a Memoir by Norman Malcolm, with a Biographical Sketch by Georg Henrik von Wright. London: Oxford University Press, 1958, 100 pages, \$2.00.

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This book contains two pieces; a short biographical sketch by Professor von Wright, currently at the University of Helsingfors, and the main Memoir by Norman Malcolm of Cornell University, long-term friend and student of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Von Wright's essay is a recounting of major events and turns of thought in the life of its subject. Emphasis is placed upon the difference between the earlier Wittgenstein — the author of the *Tractatus* whose thought was framed by the philosophical problems associated with Frege and Russell — and the later thinker who was much within himself and philosophically on his own. Von Wright suggests that it was a lecture by Brouwer on the foundations of mathematics in 1928 that brought Wittgenstein back to philosophy. Following Wittgenstein's own comments upon the shifts in his position, von Wright singles out three doctrines — the picture theory of language, truth-functional definition of "true" and "false" as applied to compound propositions, and the inexpressibility of certain features of experience — as having been abandoned later on. Von Wright makes virtually no attempt to say what Wittgenstein's later philosophy expressed beyond the claim that it "signalized a radical departure from the then existing paths of philosophy." In summing up he goes so far as to say that Wittgenstein's "sentences have a content that often lies deep beneath the surface of the language." There is, I believe, more truth in this than might be supposed, but it is surely a remarkable thesis to be put forth by a linguistic philosopher.

Malcolm's Memoir is of a different stamp. It is a most engaging portrait of Wittgenstein's personality and the temper of his mind and thought. Direct experience pervades the whole. Movingly written, it provides us with insight not only into its subject but also into the sort of impact he was capable of making upon a sensitive and devoted admirer. Though brief, the Memoir makes three distinct contributions to the understanding of a latter day "dark" philosopher. First, even if we have never met Wittgenstein or heard him, Malcolm gives us the feel of his personality and some appreciation of his motivations in philosophy. Whatever view we may ultimately adopt towards Wittgenstein's doctrines, the seriousness and concern of the genuine philosopher is certainly there. Secondly, Malcolm preserves most illuminating remarks by Wittgenstein and adds critical opinions of his own regarding certain disputed points, notably the connections between Wittgenstein's view and those of other philosophers. Of special importance is Wittgenstein's vigorous and angry rejection of the idea that his later philosophy represented a form of psychoanalysis. Not only did he repudiate this identification but he was sensitive about the widely held view that the contents of his dictated thoughts (the famous "Blue" and "Brown" books) were kept a secret. Malcolm calls attention to their circulation in mimeographed form among British philosophers at least. Wittgenstein's relation to logical empiricism also comes up for discussion. The anecdote told in connection with G. F. Stout's inquiry about verification is most instructive. Malcolm interprets Wittgenstein's parable of the

policeman, who, in gathering information about the occupations pursued by the inhabitants of a town, discovers that one of them has no occupation at all, to mean that, if a given statement is discovered to have no verification, its meaning is better understood; it is not a case of understanding that there is no statement to understand at all. Meaning is not identical with either verification or verifiability.

The notes introduced about Wittgenstein's relation to G. E. Moore are singularly interesting. In judging Moore Wittgenstein shows how very astute he was. To say that, whereas Moore was a master at destroying "premature solutions" to philosophical problems, he was incapable of recognizing a correct solution, is surely to put the matter just right. Moore's genius as an analytical thinker was confined to criticism of proposed views; when it came to solutions he seemed remarkably reluctant to arrive at any, and when he did he relied mainly on his "intuitions" and insights into certain standardized usages of English words. Both von Wright and Malcolm seem agreed that Moore's thought exercised no clear influence on Wittgenstein but that he had great respect for Moore's seriousness and singleness of intent.

The third contribution of Malcolm's Memoir is the most important; it provides us with a clue to Wittgenstein's basic philosophical significance within the framework of the analytic philosophy he pursued. Analytic philosophy in all its forms has been distinguished by its self-contained character. On the whole it has revealed itself to be what might be called a *program* philosophy. In considering a doctrine like nominalism for example analytic philosophers have been less inclined to place that doctrine in dialectical fashion against other alternative positions than to devote exclusive attention to formulating it in a clear way. It is as if the problem were never whether nominalism is true but only how it might be most clearly and adequately formulated. Analytic philosophy in short has been direct and positive in its approach and not much given to reflection upon its foundations and assumptions and especially not concerned to set these assumptions in dialectical relation to other alternatives. Wittgenstein's genius lay in his courage, ability, and willingness to force analytic philosophy beyond itself. That is to say, as one who was second to none in ability to work within the linguistic program approach, he was yet able to raise basic questions about it, largely through the fresh and original way in which he employed standard techniques. He was both within the movement and outside it at the same time. Wittgenstein's comments on his own philosophical procedure help to establish the point. He wrote,

What I give, is the morphology of the use of an expression. I show that it has kinds of uses of which you had not dreamed. In philosophy one feels *forced* to look at a concept in a certain way. What I do is to suggest, or even invent, other ways of looking at it. I suggest possibilities of which you had not previously thought. You thought that there was one

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possibility, or only two at most. But I made you think of others. Furthermore, I made you see that it was absurd to expect the concept to conform to those narrow possibilities. Thus your mental cramp is relieved, and you are free to look around the field of uses of the expression and to describe the different kinds of uses of it.

Here we see Wittgenstein working within the basic linguistic framework — the discovery and analysis of the distinct usages of expressions — but he did so armed with the idea of *possibility*. He was not trying to *force* the meaning of a concept into a standard framework already completed in advance but rather “to suggest or even invent” other possible aspects and approaches. He looked for aspects other than those normally taken by professionals as marking out the only alternatives. His discussion of possibilities in what he called the “language-game” (*Investigations*, pp. 53 ff.) and the novel treatment of simple and complex (*Ibid.*, pp. 47 ff.) nicely illustrate the point. The urge to find out all that is there, to suggest what might be there but has not yet been considered, and even to construct novel aspects reveals Wittgenstein as a genuine philosophical mind. It is only to be regretted that he confined his talents to such a small range of philosophical topics. He flirted now and then with larger questions, but the bulk of his thought concerns preliminary matters. Wittgenstein represented a most curious combination of things; he brought all of the seriousness and profundity we associate with the German philosophical tradition to the treatment of those epistemological, grammatical, and psychological questions that have been so consistently close to the British heart since the days of Occam.

Closely related to the freedom of approach within the linguistic framework was the *speculative drive* in Wittgenstein's thought. Perhaps this is too strong an expression to use in describing an analytic philosopher, but it would be difficult to find a philosopher who gives one a greater sense of effort and of anguish in bringing his thoughts to expression; to set them forth clearly was life itself. Perhaps this is what gives the brooding air of great secrets yet to be unfolded which hangs over not only Wittgenstein's philosophy but over the thinkers who devote themselves to the various colored books in which these secrets are at least partially contained. Wittgenstein just *had* to find things out or, failing that, he had to discover why they would not yield their secret. Malcolm's account is filled with the evidences of this concern and the boundless effort Wittgenstein expended in bringing his thoughts to expression. Wittgenstein's analogy between philosophical thinking and swimming fixes the point more precisely than could be done in any other way. Just as one has to exert oneself to get to the *bottom* since the natural tendency of the body is to float on the surface, so one has to labor to get to the bottom of things. Wittgenstein measured greatness by what a man's thought *cost* him. Such philosophical concern and its unquestioned

sincerity has nothing in common with the urbanity and detached cleverness of much recent British analytic philosophy.

What of Wittgenstein's relation to religious thought and belief? This is a subtle topic and one which can never be treated with thoroughness since we shall no doubt never have the available information, and indeed it is most likely that Wittgenstein had not finally settled the matter himself. But Malcolm does help us here; from what he says explicitly and what can be learned from the record of Wittgenstein's life, we are able to form some opinion about his relation to the religious questions. Despite the elusiveness of the topic, there is a remarkable agreement between the interpretations of von Wright and Malcolm. Both feel that it would be an error to think of Wittgenstein as an "irreligious" man. And yet of course everything depends upon how that term is understood. Certainly he did not adhere to a Christian faith in an orthodox sense. Von Wright stresses his *moral* earnestness and like Malcolm he points to the importance Wittgenstein attached to the conception of God as a judge and redeemer. The cosmological interpretation of God he did not understand.

What Wittgenstein appears to have rejected most emphatically is the possibility of giving to religion any *rational* foundation. And here we strike the heart of the matter; religion is taken in a radically non-intellectual sense and it appears as devoid of any rationally compelling form. Wittgenstein was nevertheless vividly aware of the religious questions and there can be no doubt of his personal concern. His wondering about the ultimate fact of existence is a case in point. Malcolm describes Wittgenstein's puzzlement over the existence of anything at all and points out that this attitude, first expressed in the *Tractatus* (6.44), endured throughout his life. It should be clear that anyone who raises the question of a ground for existence has, as von Wright acutely sees, left pantheism behind. This much at least we can say about his idea of God.

The critical question raised by Wittgenstein's approach to religion is the same one posed by virtually all of contemporary philosophy: Can we, should we, accept conceptions of language, thought, understanding and, above all, of philosophy which hand the cognitive domain entirely over to the natural sciences and common sense, thus making essentially critical discussion of religion, of morality, and of art impossible? That basic bifurcation of things so much attacked by Whitehead, James, Dewey and others, the divorce between a world of fact and a world of value, is perpetuated in Wittgenstein's approach. This is the fatal weakness. There is moreover no avoidance of the problem. They are much mistaken who believe that it is possible to follow Wittgenstein's technique in the analysis of religious language, while remaining oblivious to the "metaphysical" implications of the position. The analysis of usage — if usage involves, as it must, the intention to mean or communicate — is not independent of assumptions concerning the nature and status of the *sort of meaning* to be communicated. Thus if religion is

"That they may all be one..."



**27 Sermons and
Meditations ...
Foreword by
Edwin T. Dahlberg**

MARKING the tenth anniversary of the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches, *In the Unity of the Faith* consist of the messages of twenty-seven ambassadors of Christ who have played vital roles in the ecumenical movement. Churchmen all, they are archbishops or bishops, presidents or other executives, of their respective communions, ranging from the Eastern Orthodox groups to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends. Writers include Eugene Carson Blake, Antony Bashir, Desmond W. Bittenger, Franklin Clark Fry, G. Bromley Oxnam, and others.

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radically separated from knowledge, the meaning one can legitimately assign to religious expressions will be controlled by that fact.

Wittgenstein the man nevertheless knew the meaning of the religious dimension of life, and he seems to have understood at least to some degree the sort of faith exhibited in Pascal and Tolstoy, Augustine and Kierkegaard. This is one further indication of his radical openness to experience and his unwillingness to be confined by conventional or professional philosophy.

JOHN E. SMITH

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Philosophical Analysis and Religious Language

A Selected Bibliography

prepared by RUEL TYSON

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Idea, Diagnosis, and Power

Communism and the Theologians is a study of the theological and ethical thought of the major theologians of our time. The study is set in the framework of the encounter of Marxism and Christianity. An encounter with Marxism requires more than simple rejection of the humanistic notion that Marxism can be equated with the Christian ideal. These alternatives are no longer relevant, according to the author, since communism has disclosed its imperialistic drive and its power to win the loyalty of millions. This inhuman ideal has provided an organizing center of existence for a large enough segment of the world to be taken with the utmost seriousness. Marxism stands as a significant competitor with Christianity in its ideological base, its diagnosis of the problem of social order in an industrial age, and in a strategy for the use of power for social order. Charles West probes the thought of the theologians in order to test the adequacy with which they have encountered Marxism along these three major dimensions.

At the risk of oversimplifying this analysis, it is suggestive to see how some of the theologians fare in this transaction. Emil Brunner's position vis-a-vis Marxism appears as conservative reaction. The author considers this an undialectical rejection. Brunner has assessed communism as totalitarianism — akin in most respects to Nazism. His governing principle of persons in community whose preservation is made possible through obedience to the orders of creation tends to categorize revolution as irreverent and the subordination of persons to an idolatry backed by power as the total enemy. This stance, in the author's view, is open to the criticism that it is an ideological justification of the values of bourgeois society with little or no appreciation for the estrangement of proletarian man in the industrial age.

Joseph Hromadka is at the opposite pole from Emil Brunner, and unlike Brunner he is right in the midst of the struggle with Marxism. He has said yes to Marxism with the critical reservation of challenging its false claims to absolutism and pointing it to the true fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Hromadka's response is seen as a consequence of his profound sensitivity to the radical crisis of contemporary society and the promise of communism as an integrative principle of social reconstruction. Thus Hromadka falls within the same perspective as Emil Brunner although he takes his stand with rather than against Marxism; both views long for a unity of religion with social power in a synthesis of Christ with culture. As the author states it, "In both, the Christian remains bound not to Christ in the world, but to the world of communist power and pretension, itself."

Communism and the Theologians, by Charles C. West. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959, 399 pages, \$6.00.

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BOOKS AND IDEAS

An analysis of Paul Tillich's religious socialism discloses the extent to which Tillich's thought grappled in utmost seriousness with the autonomy of bourgeois development and the estrangement of man in an industrial age. Tillich perceived in the Marxist diagnosis a structural analogue to Judaeo-Christian prophetism and took his stand with socialism as a secondary *kairos*. The Hitler movement, the passing of this "time," and subsequent developments in Marxism have led Tillich to categorize our time as one of belief-full waiting in the agony of a sacred void. Mr. West however feels that Tillich had not appraised Marxism as the actuality of another organizing center in society and had assumed a common base in being between Christianity and socialism which would eventuate in a new theonomy. The disillusionment of such an encounter resulted from an assimilation of a religiously re-explained Marxism to an *a priori* category of being. Thus Tillich's appraisal of the contemporary situation remains his profoundest contribution, while his encounter with Marxism screened out the actualities and missed the true nature of the religious alternative which Marxism had posed.

Reinhold Niebuhr also had a long period of hope for socialist reconstruction, but his major contributions have been to set the human situation in the twilight zone between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The perpetual tension in Niebuhr's thought between the Law of Love disclosed in the Cross and the Sermon on the Mount and human attempts to balance interests toward some modicum of justice had never opened the way for more than critical cooperation with any political program. In recent years, Niebuhr has moved toward a pure pragmatism, according to West, and his radicalism has become a conservative attempt to preserve the values inherent in Western society. In a world which lacks the social and economic heritage of the West, what may seem to be realism in the American environment sounds like ideology in areas undergoing revolutionary change and caught between pressures toward a fascist or communist resolution. The author has great appreciation for Niebuhr's penetrating social and political analysis, but he feels that with all his realism Niebuhr does not appreciate the chaotic relativism and nihilism in the post-communist mood outside the West. In these regions it is not a matter of *preserving*, for the old is gone, but a question of channeling and directing revolutionary forces into creative paths.

Karl Barth receives an extended treatment in this study. In the author's view, Karl Barth has formulated a theological position which most adequately counters the Marxist charge of ideology against religion. Barth's anchorage in God's act in Jesus Christ succeeds in escaping subjectivism and founds itself in a stance beyond ideology. From this position of God's act for man and the consequent refusal to work with any notions of God, Good, or Existence which are not disclosed in that event, Karl Barth has the freedom to affirm within its proper limits the empiricism of the sciences and man's struggle to act responsibly in his actual situation. The author is critical of Barth primarily for his lack of attention to the actualities of Marxism — inclining him to equate too readily the

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forces operative in East and West. In fact Mr. West sees much more similarity in the basic theological perspectives of Niebuhr and Barth than the two theologians seem to perceive. He feels that much of Barth's thought could be supplemented in the political and economic fields with Niebuhr wisdom. In fact the author sees a mutual correction in the emphases of these two men. His most serious reservations about Barth's formulations are drawn from Paul Tillich's questions to Karl Barth. Has Karl Barth constructed a "positive" theology which cuts man off from his human involvements and erects a new form of heteronomy?

This is a thoughtful study in a field which receives too much of the wrong kind of attention in this country. From his personal experience and reading, Mr. West has interspersed his treatment with accounts of Christian encounters with Marxism in East Germany and India. Some of this material may prove more interesting than the purely theological material since it bears directly on the current situation and has a less ideological concern.

For a man who seems to feel such profound attraction to Karl Barth's "positivism of revelation," Mr. West stands very much in the Anglo-American tradition of difference in perspectives in which truth is disclosed. He sees for example an extension and correction of Barth's work in the East and West German focus on direct encounter with Marxism in the spheres of apologetics and ethics rather than theology itself. The attraction to Barthian thought and yet the discontent with his tendency to make "insensitive statements and application of theological propositions lubricated with polemics"; all of this suggests Mr. West's deep sensitivity to the central importance of participation in the common life, communication, and ethical concern. In all of these respects he seems to move much more toward Reinhold Niebuhr's "normative positivism" of the transcendent Law of Love with its consequent activity along pragmatic lines. If Karl Barth subsumes ethics under dogmatics with a consequent exaltation of verbalism, Mr. West will come down nearer Reinhold Niebuhr who tends to make dogmatics ancillary to ethics and gets on with the business of man's responsibility before God and his fellowmen. The author's statements about the responsible society in the final chapter reveals clearly his proximity to Niebuhr and also suggests that the notion of a stance beyond ideology is a Marxist illusion which cannot be countered by any theology that understands the biblical injunction against idolatry.

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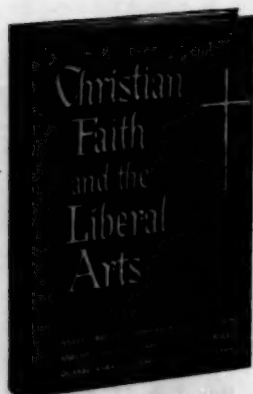
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